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Biography

OF THE

SIGNERS

TO THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

PHILADELPHIA

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BIOGRAPHY

OF THE SIGNERS TO THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

BY ROBERT WALN, Jr.

VOL. V.

EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the first day of January, in the forty-eighth year of the independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1825, R. W. POMEROY, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"*Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence.—Vol. V.*"

In conformity to the act of the congress of the United States, intituled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned."—And also to the act, entitled, "An act supplementary to an act entitled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned," and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

D. CALDWELL,
Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

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THOMAS LYNCH, JR.

THOMAS LYNCH JUNR.

Engraved by J.B. Longacre from an Enamel Painting

in the Possession of Miss E. Lynch.

LYNCH.

We often indulge in an unavailing regret, that few events belonging to the early portion of the lives of distinguished individuals, are snatched from oblivion, to illustrate the progress of their genius and virtues. The interesting period of childhood, so frequently marked by strong developments of character, glides imperceptibly away, and in the fond interchange of the affections that attend it, we cease either to observe, or afterwards to remember, those traits or incidents, by which future usefulness and distinction are unequivocally foretold. In after life, when great talents have been brought to consummate great public events, "and the Man has stamped his name on the age in which he lived," we recur, with an unwearied but unrequited industry, to fading records and doubtful traditions, for the germs of that character, whose rich maturity we have been taught to admire.

To the long list of those, of whose remembrance little now remains, beyond what has been cherished in the very recesses of domestic affection, we are about to add the name of Thomas Lynch, junior, a man distinguished among his contemporaries for valuable qualities uniformly directed to noble ends.

The family of Lynch was originally of Austria; their genealogical table affords the following anecdote, relative to the origin of its name. The town in which they lived being closely beleaguered, the inhabitants resolved to hold out to the last extremity. Having exhausted their provisions, they subsisted for some time on a field of pulse called *Lince*. Their hardy resistance being ultimately crowned with success, in gratitude for their deliverance, which they attributed principally to the subsistence that the pulse had afforded them, they changed the name of their town, or city, as well as that of their chief family, to *Lince* or Lintz. During the subsequent troubles in the empire, a branch of the family removed to England, and from Kent emigrated to Ireland, from which latter stock the Lynchs of South Carolina have descended.

Jonack Lynch, the great-grand father of Thomas Lynch, junior, must have left Connaught for South Carolina shortly after the settlement of the colony. His descendants have yet in their possession a do-

cument not devoid of curiosity and interest. It is a summary of the reasons, (written previous to his leaving Ireland,) which induced him to emigrate; in which he weighs with great scrutiny and care, the various arguments for and against the measure, and ultimately gives a preponderance in favour of the former. This paper abundantly illustrates the practical good sense and moderation which influenced the views of the early settlers of our country, and tends to prove, that, if our vast empire was not originally won by the sanguinary glory which awaited the Roman eagles, there was a moral justice in its falling into the possession of a band of virtuous and enlightened pilgrims, who fully felt the force of religious truth, and who, in scenes of difficulty and trial, brought its sublime precepts to aid them both in action and suffering.

Jonack Lynch's youngest son, Thomas, was the grandfather of the subject of this memoir, who, although he derived from his father a slender patrimony, inherited in no inconsiderable degree his vigor and sagacity; both of which he evinced by exploring many portions of the then untrodden wilderness of South Carolina, and in locating grants for several sections, comprehending the finest and most fertile portions of our territory. At this period, the cultivation of rice was confined exclusively to

the inland swamps; the alluvial lands within the flow of the tides, were generally neglected by the settlers as comparatively worthless. Thomas Lynch, however, had the discernment to discover, that this apparent evil of periodical irrigation was not only susceptible of remedy, but might be turned to the most profitable account. He, therefore, took out grants for a large portion of the lands situated on the North and South Santee rivers, as high up as Lynch's causeway, with the islands inclusive, and at his decease, left a princely estate to his son Thomas, the father of Thomas Lynch, junior, who, by way of distinction, we shall call Thomas Lynch the elder.

Of this gentleman, there are many recollections cherished by those who yet linger on the brink of the grave, and remember the happy union which his character afforded, of a public spirited patriot and enlightened planter, who uniformly dedicated a portion of the income of his fine estate to upholding the hospitality of his country, and in subserving many purposes of private charity and public beneficence.

He was emphatically a public man, and lived and died in the public service. Elected in his youth to a seat in the provincial assembly from the parish of St. James, Santee, he soon reached great eminence in that body, and was long regarded as at

the head of the country party of the province. In all the disputes with the mother country, he espoused the cause of colonial freedom with the most fervid enthusiasm, and as early as 1764, after the passage of the stamp act, was delegated as the associate of John Rutledge and Christopher Gadsden, to represent South Carolina in the first congress convened by the colonies; he uniformly continued to be chosen a member of that assembly until his death.

Without possessing the highly cultivated talents for oratory which characterized the splendid powers of Mr. Rutledge, he nevertheless attained decided success as a powerful debater, and was at once distinguished for the purity and simplicity of his style, the condensation of his thoughts, and the stern and uncompromising honesty of his opinions. With such qualities, so usefully and so honourably directed, he justly acquired great influence in the councils of his native state. So highly were his opinions appreciated on all public concerns, that the commons house of assembly, (previous to the revolution, but during the pendency of those momentous questions which produced it,) on one occasion, in consequence of his having been delayed on the road, on his way from his plantation to the city, adjourned for two days, that time might be allow-

ed him to join them in their deliberations. This compliment, infinitely more significant in its character than the most formal vote of thanks, shows that there are periods, when an anxious devotion to the public weal can produce, at least, a temporary suspension of those personal rivalries which so much distract and influence human conduct.

The life of this patriot is so much interwoven with that of his son, that we shall offer no further apology for having so long detained the reader from the short and imperfect narrative we are about to afford of the latter.

Thomas Lynch, jr. was born at his father's plantation on the banks of the North Santee river, Prince George's parish, South Carolina, on the fifth of August, 1749. His mother's maiden name was Elizabeth H. Alston, whose loss it was his misfortune to deplore in early childhood. He was placed, when of a sufficient age to leave his father's roof, at the Indigo Society School, George Town, S.C. This seminary, which at that period was richly endowed, and in a flourishing condition, must have been under the superintendance of able and faithful instructors, as it possesses the reputation of having laid the elementary basis of the education of some of the most distinguished individuals in South Carolina. The pride, however, and discernment of Mr.

Lynch's father, with the ample means of affording every accomplishment to his only son, were not content to limit the advantages of his education to one altogether provincial. Indeed, young Lynch had unfolded such infallible tokens of a capacity for letters, combined with great docility of disposition, and an ardent and ingenuous spirit, that his judicious parent determined to send him to Europe, before he had even completed his thirteenth year. On his arrival in England, he was placed at Eton school, where he remained long enough to acquire the elements of classical learning, and to qualify himself for admission as a gentleman commoner at the University of Cambridge. At this institution he took his degrees; but we regret to add, that of this interesting portion of his life, we have been unable to gather any incidents whatsoever, excepting the fact of his having enjoyed, in an eminent degree, the consideration of his contemporaries, which was firmly fixed by his virtues, acquisitions, and insatiable thirst for knowledge.

The accounts which his father received of his progress, must have been highly flattering; for, in the pride and fondness of his parental affection, he sketched out schemes of usefulness and distinction for his son, somewhat bordering on an extravagant philanthropy. Conscious that it would be in his

power to bequeath him a fortune that would take away all necessity for exertion, he was desirous of supplying the place of this effective stimulus, by more generous principles of action. He desired him to enter his name at the Temple, and to prosecute a regular course of legal studies; not for the single purpose of perfecting his education, or for the subsequent acquirement of that political momentum, which in this country seems almost invariably to be derived from success at the bar, but that he might dedicate his learning and talents, regardless of all views of profit, to those cases of unprotected truth and justice, which occasionally arise at the forum.

The affections of the parent, could be content with nothing less than that the object, with whom he had associated a large portion of the interest of his existence, should return to his native home, accomplished in all the qualities of a "finished man;" and that by a gratuitous exercise of the duties of a profession which has a most intimate connexion with the varied concerns of life, he might become the champion of innocence and misfortune.

With these agreeable reveries, none but a cynic will quarrel. They belong to the freshness and simplicity of those affections, and the virtuous illusions growing out of them, in which we are all

sometimes prone to indulge, in spite of the sad experience of life.—To speculate, however, even in impossible schemes of benevolence, is not devoid of utility. Although disappointed in their attainment, yet by the very effort we are brought nearer both to practical good and to elevated excellence.

Whatever opinion young Lynch may have secretly entertained of these views of his father, in their utmost extent, his filial obedience was too habitual not to insure his cheerful acquiescence. He consequently commenced his terms at the Temple.

At this period, however, the momentous question between the colonies and mother country was daily acquiring additional interest; and it needed no extraordinary sagacity in Mr. Lynch to discover, that an extensive field was in preparation at home, for the display of higher endowments, than could be exclusively fashioned by an acquaintance, however exact, with Bracton and Fleta.

Great Britain may be said, at this time, to have been unconsciously nourishing, as well in arms as in philosophy and letters, many of those daring spirits who subsequently contributed to the downfall of her colonial dominion. Who rolled back upon her those impetuous energies of mind and action, which her admirable institutions of education are so well calculated to nourish and perfect.

A large portion of the young men of fortune of South Carolina were scattered amidst her various seminaries, inhaling at these invigorating fountains of knowledge, the invincible spirit, which enabled them, both in the council and the field, to combat, with success, her tyranny and oppression. It was, moreover, a circumstance of peculiar good fortune, that most of these youths, when they left their homes, were recommended to the patronage and kindness of the high whig families of England; and many of them to the most distinguished peers in the British parliament, who were at that time conspicuous for their opposition to the ministry, and for their devotion to the cause of the colonies. It was in this manner that the attachment of our young countrymen, to their native soil, and a keen sympathy and indignation in the wrongs which oppressed it, were kept in a state of unimpaired vigor. These feelings occasionally broke forth into the most enthusiastic demonstrations of patriotism.

It may well be supposed that a youth like Mr. Lynch, in the one-and-twentieth year of his age, feeling the full possession of his highly cultivated powers, devoted to his country, aware that the crisis was rapidly approaching which must determine her servitude or freedom, and that the political connexions of his father would, in all probability,

enable him to take a distinguished part in the concerns of such a crisis, should have panted for the promised opportunities of distinction. The black letter of the law had never many charms for him. Although he had made himself master of the philosophy of jurisprudence, and was admirably versed in the principles of the British constitution, yet his high relish for the more fascinating portions of literature rendered the technical branches of the science exceedingly irksome to him; few, indeed, can be reconciled to them, except under the gripe of a hard and invincible necessity.

Mr. Lynch's father ultimately yielded to his wishes, and he returned to South Carolina about the year 1772, after an absence of eight or nine years. The delight which his affectionate and judicious parent must have experienced, from witnessing the consummation of all those sanguine expectations which he had ventured to entertain in relation to his son, may be well imagined by those who have felt the mingled anxieties and pleasures of paternity. We have the authority of more than one of his contemporaries for believing, that it did not require the partial fondness of a parent to form a favourable estimate of the qualifications of such a son. Few men had ever returned to America more accomplished, in the most valuable sense of the

term. With ample stores of knowledge, won from the solid parts of human learning, embellished by the graces of polite literature, possessing easy and insinuating manners, combined with a powerful and fascinating elocution, he was enabled at once to impress that community, in which he was destined to spend his short life, with a decided conviction of his great fitness for public confidence and distinction.—The men of the revolution, who were educated and travelled in foreign countries, seem to have been fully sensible of the purposes for which they went abroad, and the duties which they would have to discharge at home. They consequently corrected and amplified a knowledge derived from books, by observation and travel, and, fixing a right value on valuable things, returned untainted by the follies and fopperies of a refined but licentious society.

On his arrival in South Carolina, one of the first steps which Mr. Lynch accomplished, was to induce his father to relinquish his wishes in reference to his practising the law. This acquiescence in the inclinations of his son, was probably influenced by a strong desire to introduce him at once in public life; to promote this object, he presented him with one of his most valuable plantations on the North Santee river, that he might really, as well as ostensibly,

possess a great stake in the interests of the country. It was about this period that Thomas Lynch, jr. was united in marriage to Miss Elizabeth Shubrick. In the possession of this amiable and beautiful woman, one of the early and romantic attachments of his childhood was gratified.

Every circumstance now contributed to his domestic happiness, and personal popularity, for we find Mr. Lynch associated with his father in the provincial assemblies, and in most of the political events of the day. His *debut* as a public speaker had been made at a town-meeting at Charleston, shortly after his arrival. It was at this meeting, crowded for the purpose of taking into consideration some of the accumulated injuries inflicted by Great Britain, that he delighted his hearers by an impressive display of vigorous and enthusiastic feeling, enlightened views, and a rhetoric which partook largely of the treasures of the classics. The interest of this scene was very much enhanced, by his having followed in debate his venerable father, whose antagonists he combatted with great force and success. This alliance, subsisting between two individuals, sustained by congeniality of views, and the most devoted attachment to the same cause, and cemented by the warmest and truest affections, presented a spectacle formed to attract universal notice

and admiration. There are few situations in life, presenting a picture of more moral beauty and interest, than a parent and son mutually sustaining each other in such a cause.

It was not in a display, however successful, of mere rhetoric and elocution, that Mr. Lynch endeavoured to be useful to his country. On the raising of the first South Carolina regiment of provincial regulars, in 1775, he was appointed to the command of a company. This commission he accepted somewhat in opposition to the wishes of his father, who was then in the congress of the United States, and who urged him to proceed to Philadelphia, that he might obtain for him an appointment in the army, of a higher rank. But Mr. Lynch, with a modesty as judicious as it was remarkable, resisted his father's partial designs, by observing, that "his present commission was fully equal to his experience;" no doubt reflecting, that in the military profession, a man's subsequent enthusiasm and exertions are vastly more important than the precise point at which he commences his career.

Early in July, 1775, Mr. Lynch left Charleston, in company with the present Gen. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, then a captain in the first regiment. They commenced the recruiting service in North Carolina, and unfurled the American co-

lors in the counties of Newbern, Dauphin, and Dobbs, where they speedily met with the greatest success; raising, in a few weeks, their respective quotas. The refinements of their European education did not disqualify them for the rough insinuation, and peculiar address, necessary for this service. Their success was, however, very much promoted by the friendly exertions of captain Miller, at that time an eminent merchant in Dobbs county, who, although engaged in raising a volunteer company of riflemen himself, did not deny them his assistance. Of this warm hearted veteran, Mr. Lynch often spoke in terms of gratitude, for his hospitality and kindness.

An incident in the life of captain Miller tends to prove that there were many good men, and unquestionable patriots, at the commencement of the revolution, who, whilst they were in favour of the utmost freedom of the colonies, as colonies, were yet opposed to an absolute disruption of our political ties with the mother country. With these sentiments, captain Miller uniformly opposed the sanguinary intolerance of the tories in North Carolina, and when the Highlanders rose at Cross Creek, he joined, with his volunteer riflemen, the American standard, and was very instrumental in quelling them at Moore's Creek bridge. He remained firm-

ly with the whigs until the declaration of independence; after which event, he retired to Scotland, declaring "that he was by no means ripe for so strong and questionable a measure." He, nevertheless, carried with him the esteem and regrets of all who had witnessed the gallantry and noble disinterestedness of his conduct on various occasions.

After completing his company, Mr. Lynch commenced his march for Charleston, during which, he was attacked with the violent bilious fever of the country. His health had, previous to this attack, been seriously impaired by the exposures incident to the service in which he had been engaged; hence they were sufficient to destroy his constitution, and to make him, for the remnant of his life, habitually and constantly an invalid.

A sky, which had been unobscured by a single cloud, began now to exhibit the most gloomy portents. Towards the close of the year 1775, Mr. Lynch joined his regiment, feeble and emaciated, where he soon after received the melancholy tidings of the extreme illness of his father at Philadelphia. This intelligence was accompanied by the resignation of the seat of this inflexible patriot in congress, which he could conscientiously hold no longer than he felt himself able to discharge its duties. Although a paralytic affection was the dis-

ease by which his life was menaced, yet those who had the best opportunities of observing the progress and character of his infirmities, attributed them, in no small degree, to the anxieties for his country, which unceasingly oppressed him.

Urged by the dictates of filial piety, Mr. Lynch, notwithstanding the delicacy of his own health, lost not a moment in making the necessary arrangements to join his father, that he might exercise, in his dying moments, that love and veneration which he had always borne towards him.

He, however, encountered serious difficulties in obtaining a furlough for this purpose. His application was refused by his commanding officer, colonel Gadsden, who, with the spirit of the Roman, would have devoted his own son to the cause of his country, and who never permitted the private relations of life to interfere, even remotely, with those of a public nature. This controversy was, however, speedily terminated by the election of Mr. Lynch to the congress then convened at Philadelphia, as the successor of his father, by the unanimous vote of the provincial assembly. This compliment to a young man of twenty-seven, under all the circumstances which accompanied it, portrayed in the most vivid colours, the high and general consideration entertained for his talents and worth.

On his arrival at Philadelphia, he took his seat in the congress of 1776,—an assembly which has been justly stiled, by one of the greatest and proudest spirits of modern times, "one of the most august the world has ever witnessed." As the proceedings of this body were conducted with closed doors, we are unable, at this time, to establish the precise agency of the different members in the various events of the day. But we are justified, by the contemporary testimony of his associates, in affirming, that although Mr. Lynch's health was too feeble to allow his participating with unremitting activity in the public concerns, he nevertheless succeeded in fixing a just impression of his exalted character, superior intellect, and persuasive eloquence.

Whether the fatigues of his journey had aggravated his malady, or the change of climate had been unpropitious, it is impossible to determine, but he had not been long in congress before his health began to decline with the most alarming rapidity. He was, however, enabled to give his full sanction to those measures which were tending, with irresistible efficacy, to the declaration of independence. One of the last acts of his political life was to affix his signature to this important manifesto.

During the early part of the services of Mr. Lynch in congress, his father remained in Philadelphia. He had experienced a temporary alleviation from his bodily sufferings; and his physicians flattered themselves with the hope that he might live to reach Carolina. On this journey, which they recommended, his valuable life was terminated by a second paralytic attack at Annapolis, in the autumn of 1776, where he expired in the arms of his son.

It was not long after this distressing event, that Mr. Lynch returned home, but in a situation which did not promise a long continuance of his own life. Such were the infirmities under which he laboured, that he was frequently deprived, during several weeks, of the use of his limbs, by severe and continued rheumatic fevers, the consequences of his privations and exposures in the service of his country.

Being thus compelled to abandon all his public employments, he could not avoid realizing the painful truth, that the cause of his country, whether destined to be fortunate or otherwise, would, in all probability, be unaided by his future exertions.—This belief was forced upon him at the very period when the anxieties of his patriotism were most sensibly excited by those events which were daily

conferring fresh interest on that contest, in the fate of which he had been willing to stake both his life and fortunes.

His friends, witnessing his rapid decline with the most painful emotions, embraced, with avidity, any alternative promising even an imperfect hope of the ultimate preservation of his life. A change of climate was regarded as the only resource, as his case seemed beyond the reach of medical skill. Notwithstanding the difficulties of a voyage to Europe, rendered perilous by the hazards of capture, in which event the fate of Mr. Lynch would have been at least the tower, if not the scaffold, he was prevailed upon to embark for St. Eustatia, where, it was believed, he might find a neutral vessel bound for the south of France. He accordingly sailed about the close of the year 1779, in a ship commanded by captain Morgan, accompanied by his amiable lady, whose conjugal devotion increased with the declining health of her husband.

In this voyage, they unfortunately terminated their mortal career. The circumstances of their fate are veiled in impenetrable obscurity. As it has been said, on a similar occasion, "we know that they are dead, and that is all we know." That the ship foundered at sea, there can be little doubt. Independently of her having been injudiciously

lengthened, previous to the voyage, there was a Frenchman among the passengers, who, for some reason unknown, after the ship had been a few days at sea, was induced to remove on board a vessel which sailed in company. The account he afforded was, that the night after he left the ship, in which Mr. Lynch and his family had embarked, a violent tempest arose, in which every soul on board must have perished. A considerable time elapsed before the suspense of Mr. Lynch's relatives was removed by this distressing intelligence. Many rumours were, from time to time, in circulation, calculated to keep their hopes and fears in a state of excitement. Every ship that approached the coast, they watched with painful anxiety, in the vain hope of its being the harbinger of glad tidings—but such a harbinger never came.

Mr. Lynch's marriage was unfruitful. The immediate relatives who survived him, were three sisters—Sabina, Esther, and Elizabeth; the two first were his full sisters, and the last his half sister, by a subsequent intermarriage of his father with Hannah Motte, the daughter of Jacob Motte, a highly estimable citizen of the province, who reared a numerous family in great comfort and respectability. Of these sisters, one only is now living, who resides in Charleston. Sabina and Elizabeth are

both dead. At the period of her decease, the former was the widow of the late John Bowman, Esq. a gentleman advantageously distinguished during his life, by the exercise of an active philanthropy, and by the possession of various and highly cultivated powers of intellect;—the latter (Elizabeth,) was married to major James Hamilton, sen. an officer of the revolution, who served in the second regiment of the Pennsylvania line, and who came into Carolina during the war, in general Wayne's brigade.

Before Mr. Lynch embarked for Europe, he executed a will, by which he bequeathed, in the event of his wife's not surviving him, his ample fortune in equal proportions to his three sisters.

The views which we have occasionally presented of Mr. Lynch's character, in the course of this narrative, will supersede the necessity of our indulging in a detailed analysis of its features. If vigorous health, and a long life, had not been denied him, he would have reached and merited the highest honours of his country; at least, he enjoyed the necessary qualifications for their attainment, in an eminent degree. He not only possessed that strict moral worth which is the only sure foundation of success in life, but he exalted it by maxims and principles of the most refined delicacy and honour. His

selfdenial, evinced in a commendable control over his own passions, was as remarkable as the tenderness and ardour of his affection for his friends. Perhaps the most severe test that can be applied to the character of any man, is to place him in the situation of a slave-holder. If, with the possession of unlimited and irresponsible dominion, he is yet undebauched by the excesses of authority,—if, with the unchecked power to do wrong, he uniformly endeavours to do right, and blends the exercise of the most benignant feelings of our nature with the prerogatives of an absolute ruler, we may be satisfied that such an individual is a just man, in the most perfect acceptation of the term. To the numerous slaves, which the opulence of his father had bequeathed him, Mr. Lynch was not only a judicious master, but a kind friend, abundantly fulfilling all the duties of one of the most difficult relations in human society.

His domestic occupations were all of the most amiable cast. Habitually under the control of a fund of good sense, he yet retained enough of the passions to give a warmth and glow to his affections. No man was ever loved more ardently by his friends, or more richly deserved it. Tender to those under his protection, urbane in his intercourse with the world, embellishing the society in which he

lived by the vivacity and variety of his colloquial powers, he was universally beloved and admired.

He bore his severe illness with the resignation of a Christian, and with that philosophy in which protracted suffering is apt to instruct its unfortunate victims.

Among his faults, (and who is without them?) it might be said that he was too much addicted to the indulgence of that literary lounging, which, when urged to an extreme, degenerates into absolute indolence. His friends, therefore, sometimes found it difficult to excite him to exertion in public, more especially as this habit, co-operating with his great modesty, frequently produced an almost invincible reluctance to display himself. His fine natural powers, as we have already shown, had been most successfully cultivated by the advantages of a finished education. His devotion to letters partook largely of the enthusiasm of a peculiar passion. It has been frequently observed, that men of genius, independently of their general relish for the beauties of philosophy and letters, cherish an almost exclusive fondness for a particular author, whose work "they wear in their bosoms for secret looks and solitary enjoyment." Shakspeare was the volume that Mr. Lynch loved most:—to this immortal bard he paid

the homage of a spirit deeply impressed by the wonders of his vast and inimitable genius.

It was by an indulgence in these elegant pursuits, that he was enabled to adorn his discourse, both written and oral, with the treasures of a rich fancy and exquisite taste: and the effect of these qualifications was not lessened by a frivolous love of exhibiting them. In the various public assemblies in which he served, he seldom spoke, and never but on the most important occasions. When he did rise, he commanded profound attention, and gave the most unequivocal tokens of the adaptation of his powers to the higher excellencies of oratory.

Although this narrative is enriched by few facts of a permanent, or general interest, yet enough has been said to justify the confidence reposed in his abilities and integrity, by his fellow citizens. With unshaken firmness, he promoted the success of the cause which he had adopted, until the premature prostration of his bodily powers compelled him, with sorrowful hesitation, to retire from the path of his public duties, and circumscribed that range of usefulness, which, from the vigour of his mind, appeared to be almost unlimited. The catastrophe which terminated his life, is one of those afflicting dispensations which carries with it a peculiar sorrow. Death, in its mildest form, is shroud-

ed in terror;—but to be plunged, perhaps without one moment of preparation, into eternity, is an event peculiarly awful, and calculated to arouse the deepest emotions in the hearts of the survivors.

Such were the services, the abilities, the virtues, and the fate, of Mr. Lynch. His public character is perpetuated in the proudest record of his country; and his virtues are now bequeathed as a pure and instructive model to posterity.

MATTHEW THORNTON.

THORNTON.

Matthew Thornton was a native of Ireland, where he was born about the year 1714. Two or three years subsequent to his birth, his father, James Thornton, emigrated to this country with his family, and resided at Wiscasset, in Maine. In a few years he removed to the town of Worcester, in the province of Massachusetts, where he conferred the benefits of an academical education upon his son, whom he designed for one of the learned professions. He accordingly commenced, and prosecuted, his medical studies under the superintendence of Dr. Grout, of Leicester, in Massachusetts, and after the usual preparatory course, embarked in the practice of medicine in Londonderry, New Hampshire. The original settlement of this town by natives of Ireland, probably induced him to establish the early scenes of his usefulness among those who proverbially possess warm national remembrances. He

rapidly acquired extensive and well merited reputation as a physician and surgeon, and in the course of several years' successful practice, became comparatively wealthy.

In the beginning of the year 1745, an expedition against Cape Breton was planned by governor Shirley, and submitted to the legislature of Massachusetts, in which it was adopted by a majority of one. The co-operation of New Hampshire being required, the legislature of that province evinced much greater enthusiasm and alacrity, and immediately assented to the measure. Colonel William Pepperell, a merchant of unblemished reputation, and engaging manners, was appointed to command the expedition. Before he accepted this appointment, he consulted with the celebrated George Whitefield, who, in some degree, encouraged the measure, and gave it the appearance of a crusade, by giving as a motto for their flag *Nil desperandum Christo duce.* On the first of May, he invested the city of Louisburg. The New Hampshire troops, animated with enthusiastic ardour, partook of all the labours and dangers of the siege, and were employed, during fourteen successive nights, with straps over their shoulders, and sinking to the knees in mud, in drawing cannon from the landing place to the camp, through a morass. A curious

exploit of lieutenant general Vaughan, a son of lieutenant governor Vaughan of New Hampshire, inspirited the exertions of the besiegers, and damped the courage of the besieged. Having set the warehouses in the north-east part of the harbour on fire during the night, the smoke was driven by the wind into the grand battery, which created so much terror and confusion among the French, that they abandoned the battery, and retired to the city. The next morning, as Vaughan was returning with only thirteen men, he crept up the hill which overlooked the battery, and observed that the chimnies of the barracks were without smoke, and the staff without a flag. He then bribed a Cape Cod Indian to crawl in at an embrasure, and open the gate; and, having obtained full possession, addressed the following note to the commanding general: "May it please your honour to be informed, that, by the grace of God, and the courage of thirteen men, I entered the royal battery about nine o'clock, and am waiting for a re-enforcement and a flag." In the mean time, a hundred men were despatched in boats to retake the battery; but the intrepid Vaughan, in the face of a brisk fire from the city and the boats, prevented their landing, with his gallant little party, until re-enforcements arrived. The successful result of this siege could scarcely have been

anticipated, and arose in a great degree from the unprepared and mutinous state of the garrison. It was conducted in a tumultuous manner; for, although the army presented a formidable front to the enemy, the rear was a scene of confusion and frolic: while some were on duty at the trenches, others were racing, wrestling, pitching quoits, firing at marks or at birds, or running after shot from the enemy's guns, for which they received a bounty. A vigorous sortie would have caused the destruction of the scattered besiegers. A plan, indeed, for the reduction of a regularly constructed fortress, drawn by a lawyer, to be executed by a merchant, at the head of a body of husbandmen and mechanics, did not afford very flattering prospects of success. However, on the seventeenth of June, mutiny, discontent, and the want of provisions and stores, induced Rochambeau to surrender, and "the Dunkirk of America" was occupied by the New England troops. If any one circumstance, says a writer of that period, had taken a wrong turn on our side, and if any one circumstance had not taken a wrong turn on the French side, the expedition must have miscarried. The news of this important victory astonished Europe; but the enterprising spirit of New England gave a serious alarm to those jealous fears which had long pre-

dicted the independence of the colonies, and great pains were taken in England to ascribe all the glory to the navy, and lessen the merit of the army.*

Doctor Thornton participated in the perils of this fortunate expedition, as a surgeon in the New Hampshire division of the army, consisting of five hundred men; and it is a creditable evidence of the professional abilities and attention of the medical department, that, from among that number, only six individuals died from sickness previous to the surrender of the town, notwithstanding they had been subjected to excessive toil and constant exposure.

At the commencement of the Revolutionary war, Doctor Thornton still resided in Londonderry, and held the rank of a colonel in the militia. He was also commissioned as a justice of the peace, under the administration of Benning Wentworth, who was superseded in favour of his nephew, John Wentworth, in 1766; but similar civil appointments, conferring in any case little distinction, became so numerous, and were so easily procured during the time of governor B. Wentworth, that the office was almost rendered contemptible. When he assumed the chair, he found only twenty-five justices of the peace in the whole province; but, in the first com-

* Belknap, Hist. New Hampshire, vol. ii, chap. xix.

mission which he issued, he nominated as many in the town of Portsmouth alone. Numerous publications, ridiculing this profusion of "conservators pacis," appeared, among which was a pasquinade, published in 1765, and attributed to judge Parker. He humorously observes that

"——When their worships manifold,
Like men divinely blessed of old,
Were bid 't' increase and multiply,'
Obsequious rose a numerous fry,
Who, ever prompt and nigh at hand,
Could scatter justice through the land.
Then, with important air and look,
The sons of Littleton and Coke
Swarming appear'd, to mind the Squires;
(What honours such a post requires!)
These skilful clerks, always attending,
Help'd to despatch all matters pending;
Took care that judgment (as it should,)
Was rendered for the man that sued;
Aided their honours to indite,
And sign'd for those who could not write.
Who but must think these happy times,
When men, adroit to punish crimes,
Were close at hand?—and, what is better,
Made every little tardy debtor
Fulfil his contract, and to boot,
Pay twice his debt in costs of suit."

In 1775, when the British government was dissolved, and a provincial convention formed for temporary purposes, Matthew Thornton was appointed the first president.

Although the co-operation of the inhabitants of New Hampshire with the other colonies, in their opposition to the Stamp Tax, did not appear very cordial, from their omission to send delegates to the congress of 1765, yet the state assembly, at their next meeting, adopted the same measures, and forwarded petitions to England, similar to those which had been prepared by the congress. The provinces of New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Virginia, were unrepresented; but the legislators of the two last were not in session, and the former alone, although joining in the general opposition, declined sending delegates to the convention. This defalcation, so destructive to the unanimity which ought to have characterized the proceedings of the oppressed colonists, probably arose from the exercise of the same influence which created a reluctance on the part of the merchants of Portsmouth to adopt the non-importation agreement, in 1769; but the popularity and power of governor Wentworth, were unable to cope with the spirit of patriotism, strengthened by the conviction that their whole intercourse with the other colonies would be suspended, unless they followed the general example, by forming an association similar to those which had been elsewhere adopted; this was accordingly effected in 1770. But notwithstanding these ap-

pearances, the popular spirit of New Hampshire was decidedly, but temperately, displayed, upon all proper occasions, in opposition to the odious tax which had been imposed. Effigies of the distributor of stamps were exhibited at Portsmouth, and he was compelled publicly to deliver up his commission and instructions, which were mounted on the point of a sword, and carried in triumph through the town: an oath was also administered to him, purporting that he would neither directly nor indirectly attempt to execute his office. The stamp act was to commence its operations on the first day of November, 1765, when the New Hampshire Gazette appeared with a mourning border: the bells tolled, and a funeral procession was made for the Goddess of Liberty; but, on depositing her in the grave, some signs of life were supposed to be discovered, and she was carried off in triumph. These exhibitions served to incite the spirit of the populace until the repeal of the act; and at the same time, rendered it more easy to be aroused upon the renewal of oppressive measures, which occurred in the imposition of a tax upon tea. The permission granted to the East India Company, to export tea to America upon their own account, excited a general alarm throughout the colonies: resolved to act with becoming energy, the consignees were in some

places compelled to relinquish their appointments, and the cargoes of teas were returned unladen, or deposited in stores until they could be reshipped; and in Boston, where the people had been driven to desperation, they were destroyed. In New Hampshire, however, the prudence of governor Wentworth, the vigilance of the magistrates, and the firmness of the people, were combined, and the hateful commodity was sent away without any damage, and with but little tumult.

In the midst of these ferments, and with daily indications of the approaching commencement of hostilities, the colonies from New Hampshire to Georgia inclusive, resolved, at the instigation of Massachusetts, to appoint delegates to a general congress to be held in Philadelphia, on the fourth day of September, 1774. The members from New Hampshire were Nathaniel Folsom, and John Sullivan, Esquires, who were appointed by a convention held for that purpose in Exeter, in the month of July. On the thirteenth of December, an order passed by the king in council, prohibiting the exportation of gunpowder and other military stores to America, reached Portsmouth by express; the committee of the town hastily and secretly collected a body of men, and before the governor had any suspicion of their intentions, assaulted and captured the fort,

and carried off one hundred barrels of gunpowder: a similar transaction took place in Rhode Island; and these may be considered the earliest and most glaring acts of opposition which had occurred.

Soon after general Gage had opened the bloody drama of war at Lexington and Concord, on the nineteenth of April, 1775, the British government in New Hampshire was terminated by the retirement of governor Wentworth. Mr. Thornton now arose, amid a perilous and appalling scene, to the presidency of the provincial convention. On the second of June, 1775, a few days previous to the flight of the British governor, an address to the inhabitants of the state was prepared by the convention, to which the name of Matthew Thornton is affixed, and which, as a rare document, and strongly illustrative of the temper and firmness of that assembly, is worthy of preservation:

"IN PROVINCIAL CONGRESS;

Exeter, June 2, 1775.

"*To the Inhabitants of the Colony of New Hampshire.*

"FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

"You must all be sensible that the affairs of America have at length come to a very affecting and alarming crisis. The horrors and distresses of a civil war, which, till of late we only had in contem-

plation, we now find ourselves obliged to realize. Painful, beyond expression, have been those scenes of blood and devastation, which the barbarous cruelty of British troops have placed before our eyes. Duty to God,—to ourselves,—to posterity,—enforced by the cries of slaughtered innocents, have urged us to take up arms in our own defence. Such a day as this was never before known, either to us, or to our fathers. You will give us leave, therefore, in whom you have reposed special confidence, as your representative body, to suggest a few things which call for the serious attention of every one who has the true interest of America at heart. We would, therefore, recommend to the colony at large, to cultivate that Christian union, harmony, and tender affection, which is the only foundation upon which our invaluable privileges can rest with any security; or our public measures be pursued with the least prospect of success.

"We also recommend that a strict and inviolable regard be paid to the wise and judicious counsels of the late American congress; and particularly, considering that the experience of almost every day points out to us the danger arising from the collection and movements of bodies of men, who, notwithstanding we willingly hope would promote the

common cause and serve the interest of their country, yet are in danger of pursuing a track which may cross the *general plan*, and so disconcert those public measures which we view as of the greatest importance; we must, in the most express and urgent terms, recommend it, that there may be no movements of this nature but by the direction of the committees of the respective towns or counties; and those committees at the same time advising with this congress, or with the committee of safety in the recess of congress, where the exigence of the case is not plainly too pressing to leave room for such advice.

"We further recommend, that the most industrious attention be paid to the cultivation of lands and American manufactures, in their various branches,—especially the linen and woollen; and that the husbandry might be managed with a particular view thereto;—accordingly, that the farmer raise flax, and increase his flock of sheep, to the extent of his ability.

"We further recommend a serious and steady regard to the rules of temperance, sobriety, and righteousness;—and that those laws, which have heretofore been our security and defence from the hand of violence, may still answer all their former valuable purposes, though persons of vicious and

corrupt minds would willingly take advantage from our present situation.

"In a word;—We seriously and earnestly recommend the practice of that pure and undefiled religion, which embalmed the memory of our pious ancestors, as that alone upon which we can build a solid hope and confidence in the Divine protection and favour, without whose blessing all the measures of safety we have, or can propose, will end in our shame and disappointment.

MATTHEW THORNTON, *President.*"

This convention having been appointed for six months only, applied, before the expiration of that time, to the general congress for their advice, respecting some mode of government for the future, and transmitted the following instructions to their delegates:

"We would have you immediately use your utmost endeavours to obtain the advice and direction of the congress, with respect to a method of our administering justice, and regulating our civil police. We press you not to delay this matter, as its being done speedily will probably prevent the greatest confusion among us."

On the third of November, 1775, congress took into consideration the report of the committee to

which these instructions had been referred, and recommended to the provincial convention, to call a full and free representation of the people, and that the representatives so called should establish such a form of government, as, in their judgment, would best promote the happiness of the people, and most effectually secure peace and good order in the province, during the continuance of the existing dispute between Great Britain and the colonies. The members of the convention were principally men who knew nothing of the theory of government, and had never before been concerned in public affairs; but in the short term of six months, they were convinced by experience, that it was improper for a legislative assembly to consist of one house only. Having, accordingly, framed a temporary form of government, they assumed the name and authority of a house of representatives, and elected twelve persons to constitute a distinct branch of the legislature, under the title of a council. The office of president of the convention, held by Mr. Thornton, was accordingly annulled. Meshech Weare, Esq. an old and faithful servant of the public, was appointed president of the council. The non-election of Mr. Thornton, who then held the highest office in the civil service, did not certainly proceed from

a want of confidence in his abilities and patriotism, as his subsequent speedy nomination to congress amply attests, but rather from the superior claims of Mr. Weare. The ancestors of this eminent man had been in public stations from the first settlement of the province; and he had, himself, been engaged in public affairs during the long term of forty-five years. He was chosen speaker of the house of assembly, in 1752; commissioner to the congress at Albany, in 1754; afterwards one of the justices of the superior court, and in 1777, chief justice. Such was the imperfection of the temporary constitution, and such the confidence reposed in him by the people, that he was invested at the same time with the highest offices, legislative, judicial, and executive, in which he was continued by annual elections during the whole war. He was not a person of an original and inventive genius, but he possessed extensive knowledge, an accurate judgment, a calm temper, a modest deportment, an upright and benevolent heart, and a habit of prudence and diligence in discharging the various duties of public and private life. In 1784, when a new and permanent constitution was adopted, he was again elected president; but, worn out with public services, he resigned his office before the expiration of the year,

and, after languishing under the infirmities of age, died, in his seventy-third year, on the fifteenth of January, 1786. Thus, when we consider the superior years, services, and political experience, of Mr. Weare, his preferment to the presidency of the council can inflict no wound, even by implication, upon the character of Doctor Thornton. On the 5th of January, 1776, he was elected speaker of the general assembly.

On the twelfth of September, 1776, he was appointed, by the house of representatives, a delegate to represent the state of New Hampshire in congress, during the term of one year. He did not take his seat in that illustrious body until the fourth of November following, being four months after the passage of the Declaration of Independence; but he immediately acceded to it, and his signature is enrolled among those of the FIFTY-SIX worthies, who have immortalized their names by that memorable and magnanimous act. The case of Mr. Thornton is not singular: neither Dr. Benjamin Rush, George Clymer, James Wilson, George Ross, nor George Taylor, Esquires, were present in congress, on the fourth of July, 1776, not having been chosen delegates, by the legislature of Pennsylvania, until the twentieth day of that month. The

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explanation of the Hon. Thomas M'Kean, relative to the omission of his name as a signer to the Declaration of Independence in the printed journals of congress, was conclusive and satisfactory; and his claims have been universally admitted. "Modesty, he says, "should not rob any man of his just honour, when, by that honour, his modesty cannot be offended. My name is not in the printed Journals of Congress as a party to the Declaration of Independence, and this, like an error in the first concoction, has vitiated most of the subsequent publications; and yet the fact is, that I was then a member of congress for the state of Delaware, was personally present in congress, and voted in favour of independence on the fourth of July, 1776, and signed the declaration after it had been engrossed upon parchment, where my name, in my own hand writing, still appears." Henry Wisner, Esquire, was also in congress, and voted for the Declaration of Independence, although his name does not appear among the signatures to that document. He appeared in congress on the fourteenth of September, 1774, as a delegate from the county of Orange, in the province of New York, and was admitted to a seat as a deputy from that colony. On the twenty-second of April, 1775, he was again elected by the New

York convention, in conjunction with Messrs P. Livingston, Duane, Alsop, Jay, Boerum, Floyd, Schuyler, Clinton, Morris, Lewis, and R. R. Livingston, and took his seat on the fifteenth day of May following. After performing the duties of his station with much ability, he was present and voted for independence, on the fourth of July, 1776: his presence is attested by the Journals of Congress, which record his appointment to perform certain services on that day; and the fact of his having supported that important measure, is established by the testimony of Mr. M'Kean. The thanks of the convention of New York were presented to him, on the thirteenth of May, 1777, for his long and faithful services in the continental congress.

The minds of the people had, in general, become prepared and anxious for a declaration of independence, and they called upon their delegates in congress to execute the act which would at once sever them from foreign dominion. On the eleventh of June, 1776, a committee was appointed by the assembly of New Hampshire, "to make a draught of a declaration of the general assembly for the independence of the United Colonies on Great Britain," to be transmitted to their delegates in congress.

On the tenth of January, 1776, Doctor Thornton was appointed a judge of the superior court of New Hampshire, which office he retained until the year 1782. He had previously received the appointment of chief justice of the court of common pleas. On the twenty-fourth of December, 1776, he was elected, together with William Whipple and Josiah Bartlett, to represent the state of New Hampshire in congress, for the term of one year, from the twenty-third of January, 1777. At the expiration of that time, he concluded his congressional labours, which had been performed with undeviating assiduity, and a strict regard to the prosperity and honour of the country.

Towards the close of the year 1779, he removed to Exeter, and, in 1780, purchased the Colonel Lutwyche farm, pleasantly situated on the banks of the Merrimack, to which he retired a short time after. In this delightful abode, he connected the business of agriculture with his other diversified occupations. Being now far advanced in life, he relinquished, in a great measure, the practice of medicine; but whenever his professional services were particularly required, they were cheerfully granted, and at all times, highly appreciated. He interested himself in the municipal affairs of the town, and was, for several years, chosen one of the

select-men. During one or two years, he served as a member of the general court; and was elected to the office of senator in the state legislature. On the 25th January, 1784, he was appointed a justice of the peace and quorum throughout the state, under the new constitution, which office he continued to hold until the time of his death. In 1785, he appears to have terminated his political career, in the seventy-first year of his age, as a member of the council, under the presidency of John Langdon.

The deep interest entertained by Doctor Thornton in relation to the welfare of the community, even when he had, in a great measure, retired from active political life, is apparent in the annexed communication to president Weare, written at a period when the unhappy disputes between the states of New Hampshire and Vermont, wore an aspect truly alarming. The latter, not then an acknowledged state of the union, had extended its jurisdiction over a number of towns within the limits of the former, and officers of justice, appointed by the authority of both states, were exercising jurisdiction in the same places, and over the same persons. Party rage, strong contentions, and deep resentments, were produced by these clashing interests, and, at the period when the letter of Mr.

Thornton was written, a serious affray in the town of Chesterfield, during which the respective sheriffs of the two states were at different periods committed to prison by the stronger party, and orders were on each side issued to oppose force by force, threatened to lead to open acts of hostility.

Merrimack, 29th Dec. A. D. 1781.

HON. AND DEAR SIR,

The Vermont affair grieves me more than our war with Great Britain. Heathens were shocked when brother killed brother in battle; but how much more ought Christians to shudder at the very thought of brother killing brother about a line of jurisdiction. For mercy's sake, Sir, if possible, prevent every hostile measure until the honourable continental congress explicitly fixes their bounds, and informs them what to depend upon, and New Hampshire how to conduct. Taking one man may begin a war, but when, or how, it will end, the Great Ruler only knows. From the best information, a very great majority on both sides of the river will acquiesce in the determination of congress: if so, and we wait, all will be peace. If they will not, and we wait, it will be the thirteen United Sates against the Vermonters. If we do not wait, it may be called a premature act of New

Hampshire. I know it is said, take a few of the leaders and the rest will submit. The British ministry reasoned the same way about Americans. What will the rest be about while our men are taking and bringing away the few? Send an army before they are prepared, many say. They are prepared to begin a war whenever we provoke them, and I presume it will not be done very soon. Give them time, and they will join with the Britains, Canadians, and Indians, are thought powerful reasons for expedition. I think for procrastination, because they have had sufficient time already, and if they intend to prosecute that scheme, it is not best to begin: if so, it ought to be the thirteen United States, and not one of the smallest, to engage them. The power of making war or peace is delegated to the honourable continental congress, and it would be impertinent to ask if one, has the power that every state has given up to congress.

Pray, Sir, excuse this trouble: it does not come to dictate, but to ease my mind, anxious for my country, and the peace and happiness of mankind.

Your most obedient,
and very humble servant,
MATTHEW THORNTON.

The Hon. Meshech Weare, President of the Council; State of New Hampshire.

In private life, the social feelings and attachments of Doctor Thornton, attracted the general esteem of those by whom he was surrounded: the young and the old were alike participators in the agreeable versatility of his powers, and the inexhaustible stock of information which a long and industrious life had accumulated. His memory was well stored with a large fund of entertaining and instructive anecdotes, which he could apply to any incident, or subject of conversation. Hence his society was universally courted, and few ever left his presence without being both instructed and amused. Nor were his instructions speedily forgotten; for they were invariably interwoven with some anecdote of the character or event which he wished to describe, and illustrative of the lesson which he desired to impart; these pleasant intertextures were so applicable, that the recollection of them could not fail to recall to the memory the circumstances with which they were connected. In his moments of mental recreation, he exhibited the very essence of hilarity and humour, in the infinite variety of his stories, and his mode of narrative, which was particularly inviting. In this rational pastime, he never descended to vulgarity, but afforded general amusement, while he instructed the minds, and improved the morals, of his hearers: like the great Franklin, whom he, in

many traits of character, resembled, he illustrated his sentiments by fable; in which he displayed a peculiar and original talent. His inventive powers in exercises of this nature, were quick and judiciously directed: he frequently commenced a fictitious narrative for the amusement of his auditors, and, like an Eastern story-teller, continued it for the space of an hour, supported solely by instantaneous invention. His posture, and manner of narrating, were as peculiar as the faculty itself: when he placed his elbows upon his knees, with his hands supporting his head, it was the signal for the *erectis auribus* of the assembly. Their attention became instantly arrested, and irresistibly fixed upon the narrative; the curious incidents of which were evolved in the most masterly manner. Commencing with a slow articulation, and a solemn countenance, he gradually proceeded in his tale, casting, at intervals, his black and piercing eyes upon the countenances of his hearers, to detect the emotions excited in their breasts, and pausing to observe its full effects. His ingenuity in this accomplishment was astonishing, and he never failed to interest the feelings, and excite admiration.

His easy style of epistolary correspondence, and the humour with which it was occasionally con-

ducted, may be gathered from the following letter written during his attendance in congress:

Baltimore, 23d January, A. D. 1777.

HON. SIR,

October 15th, left home, and experienced the truth of the following lines:

Soon varying nature shifteth every scene;
Rough ways succeed the smooth; storms, the serene, &c.

Arrived in Philadelphia the 3d of November:—the 8th, was inoculated for the small-pox, and during our confinement, we had the honour to be attended by Doctor Cash, Doctor Surly, Doctor Critical Observer, Doctor Gay, and Doctor Experience, in the following order, viz: Between the hours of 10 and 11 A. M., Dr. Cash—"How is 't Sir, and Madam?"— and whatever our complaints were, his answer was "All 's pretty," and vanished in a second. He was the operator, and for a few days visited us as above, and I saw no more of him till I paid his bill of eighteen dollars. Dr. Surly came two or three times each day; as a friend viewed us through his glasses, and then, with a smiling grin, softly said, "What, no worse yet? this is trifling to what you'll feel before all 's over." Dr. Critical Observer, a young doctor who told me he would critically observe every stage of the small-pox in us, to gain

experience, came once in two or three days, and staid about a minute at each time. Dr. Gay, a young doctor that came as a friend two or three times every day, tripped round, sung a tune, and told me "all would end well." Dr. Experience, a merchant, who had had the small-pox, visited us every day, and gave a much truer account of the small-pox than all the Doctors.

Soon after we got abroad, the news of Howe's army on their march for Philadelphia, induced the congress to adjourn to this town, where the man with boots has very great advantage of a man with shoes. The carriages are stopped, by the depth of the mire, in the middle of the streets: the ladies with silk gowns and shoes, make a fine figure. From the time we left home, the prayers and graces became shorter every stage, until we hear neither. The religion is,—take all advantages, pay your debts, and do as you please.

By the assistance of my worthy colleague, (general Whipple,) and good friends, we obtained a grant of 100,000 dollars, which we send per the bearer, and are obliged to detain him till the Massachusetts money, &c. is ready. Pray, Sir, take the trouble to present my compliments and thanks to the honourable council, for the late unmerited additional honour of beginning my appointment the

twenty-third of January, and inform them that my constitution and circumstances oblige me humbly to ask leave to return home next spring. The necessity of having good men in congress is so evident, that I shall only beg they may be sent in time. For public news, I must refer you to the bearer. The congress are doing all in their power to procure assistance, foreign and domestic. May God give success.

Wisdom to the councils, and success to the arms of America, is the prayer and constant desire of,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

MATTHEW THORNTON.

The Hon. Meshech Weare, Esq.

Pres. of the Hon. Council of N. H.

His house was, at all times, open to those who were houseless, and his table was frequently surrounded by individuals, from whom gratitude alone could be anticipated in return for his kindness and hospitality. Nevertheless it would be unreasonable to suppose that all the high qualifications possessed by Dr. Thornton, were wholly free from alloy—for he was human. It is asserted that the *auri sacra fames*, in some degree, detracted from the dignity of the character which he generally sustained; but this accusation may have sprung from

the observations of those who did not properly distinguish economy from avarice. He was never known to be unjust, although he rigidly enforced his rights, without reference to the smallness of the amount: hence he was considered severe in his pecuniary claims. If he was strict in obtaining that which was due to him, he was scrupulously exact in liquidating his obligation to others.

Another trait in his character, which frequently excited unpleasant, but momentary, feelings, was his powers of satire. Although no man more patiently endured a cutting sarcasm, but few were inflicted on judge Thornton, without a prompt and keen retaliation. In fact, he was fond of pleasant jests, and was even immoderately pleased at a pungent pun, or a lively repartee. Many diverting anecdotes of this kind are preserved by his surviving companions.

As a neighbour he was universally loved, as a citizen respected, and as a physcian, he gained the confidence of the people, by his skill and punctuality. He cherished with fondness the remembrance of those individuals of merit, with whom he had formed an acquaintance during the chequered scenes of his life, and endeavoured to preserve undiminished, their respect and approbation. In the evening of life, after his professional and political

usefulness was almost exhausted, he was in the habit of visiting his old friends in Londonderry, the once happy scene of his youthful exertions. In these interviews, he was feelingly affectionate;—grasping the hand with a real sensibility of the heart, in the recollection of the joys of by-gone days. The reiteration of this social formality was a renewed pledge of his kindness and affection: his recollection of the children in the neighbourhood was remarkably acute, and, without invidious distinctions, he possessed a particular favourite among the children of all his acquaintances;—a foible perhaps incident to the character of a family physician. During these visits, he never alighted from his chaise, owing to the infirmities of age; but when the arrival of *the judge* was announced, the whole family was laid under a willing contribution, and old and young alike flocked out to bid him welcome.

His own children, who were absent from home, participated largely in his warmest affections: he visited them annually, and expended some time in their society. Their love and veneration for him, and unceasing solicitude for his welfare, amply repaid his paternal anxiety, and were a soothing consolation to his declining years. He was greatly recreated by these excursions, and never returned from them without apparent satisfaction.

Dr. Thornton was indeed, a man, venerable for his age and skill in his profession, and for the several important and honourable offices which he had sustained;—noted for the knowledge which he had acquired, and his quick penetration into matters of abstruse speculation. His virtues were a model for imitation, and while memory does her office, will be held in grateful recollection. His character as a Christian, a father, a husband, and a friend, was bright and unblemished, and if he had any of those failings which are inseparable from humanity, they have long since been forgotten.

His vigorous mind seemed to seize boldly upon the leading points of the subject which it proposed to investigate, and never to relax its grasp until it had arrived, almost uniformly, to a correct conclusion. He enjoyed diversified and almost unlimited information, from the habit of reading which he maintained during the whole course of his life. He was a philosopher in the strictest sense; but, although he possessed a mind, able, and prone to engage in metaphysical inquiries, and capable of the deepest research, he did not wholly devote himself to abstract speculations. His powerful genius was formed to grasp "heaven, earth, and ocean, and plunder them of their sweets," to pass "from grave to gay, from lively to serene," and still excite undi-

minished and lasting admiration. In every situation of life in which he was placed, and in every act which he thought it proper to perform, the *mens divina* was conspicuous; and that talismanic attribute of the human soul was transcendent. When the blossoms of honour and of old age were thick upon him, he was in the constant practice of reading such works of fancy as possessed any merit, or tended rationally to amuse the mind, and improve the morals. Light reading, in his moments of recreation, accorded better with the certain, however imperceptible, mental decay, which the octogenarian must inevitably experience, and those delightful creatures of the imagination served, for a season, by enticing his attention, to invigorate an enfeebled frame, which unrelieved studies upon abstruse topics would have prostrated. He wrote, however, political essays for the public papers after he was eighty years of age, and about the same period prepared for the press a metaphysical work, which was never published. It is comprised in seventy-three manuscript pages in quarto, and possesses the following singular title:

"PARADISE LOST; or the origin of the Evil, called Sin, examined; or how it ever did or ever can come to pass, that a creature should or could do any thing, unfit or improper for that creature to do; or

how it ever did or ever can come to pass, that a creature should or could omit, or leave undone, what that creature ought to have done, or was fit and proper for that creature to do; or how it ever was, or can be possible for a creature to displease the Creator in Thought, Word, or Action."

This abstruse production exhibits, in a strong light, the wonderful powers of mind possessed by Doctor Thornton, which, triumphant over time, enabled him, at a period of life attained by few members of the human family, to wrestle with a subject which particularly demands a large portion of mental vigour. The practice of no profession affords a wider field for the exercises of the inquisitive mind in the development of the human character, than that of physic. The medical practitioner habitually sees man as he is, devested of the factitious aids which attend his intercourse with society;—depressed by disease, his mind assumes its natural tone, whether it be one of dignity or degradation. He recognises the stern leader of armies in the plaintive and murmuring invalid, and the gifted politician in the testy and terrified valetudinarian. Beneath a sickly and enfeebled frame, he finds a soul inflexible in strength, and under the soft form of suffering woman, an energy of mind which would exalt the character of the hero. Hence Doctor Thornton,

profiting by his professional advantages, as well as those commonly afforded by worldly intercourse; obtained an accurate and extensive knowledge of human nature.

On the great question which was decided in favour of our national independence, he was invariably steadfast, and at all times evinced his readiness to support with his property and life, the declaration to which he had publicly subscribed. His political character may be best estimated by the fact, that he enjoyed the confidence, and was the unshaken disciple, of Washington.

In relation to the religious sentiments and opinions of Doctor Thornton, it is not ascertained that he ranked himself among any of the established sects of Christians. It is, however, certain, that no man was more deeply impressed with a belief in the existence and bounties of an over-ruling Providence, which he strongly manifested by a practical application of the best and wisest injunctions of the Christian religion: a believer in the divine mission of our Saviour, he implicitly followed the great principles of his doctrine, so far as human frailty would permit. Exemplary for his regard to the public institutions of religion, and for his constancy in attending public worship, he trod the courts of the house of God with steps tottering with age and infirmity.

When he had passed the eightieth year of his age, he was attacked with the whooping-cough, which proved extremely distressing. But, notwithstanding the violence of the spasms, which nearly deprived his feeble frame of breath and pulsation, he continued his practice of visiting, and fully retained his natural pleasantry and humour. For many years previous to his death, a slight affection of the palsy had impaired his voice, which rendered it difficult for him, at certain seasons, to express himself intelligibly: but even this infirmity, in such a man as Doctor Thornton, served to enhance the veneration in which he was held. The solemn enunciation of his voice attracted fresh attention, and increased that respect and awe which old age is wont to inspire.

He died in Newburyport, Massachusetts, while on a visit to his daughters, on the twenty-fourth day of June, 1803, in the eighty-ninth year of his age: his remains were conveyed to New Hampshire, and interred on the succeeding Sabbath, within a short distance of Thornton's ferry, on the Merrimack River. His surviving children consisted of two sons and two daughters. James Thornton, Esquire, his eldest son, was a representative from Merrimack to the general court, during several years, and died in July, 1817, aged 53 years. Matthew Thornton

was graduated at Dartmouth college, in 1787; was admitted to the practice of the law; and died at Merrimack on the fifth of December, 1804, in the thirty-third year of his age; his surviving daughters are Mrs. Betton, widow of the late Hon. Silas Betton of Salem, in New Hampshire, and Mrs. M'Gaw, of Bedford.

Doctor Thornton was a man of large stature, exceeding six feet in height, and his form was symmetrically proportioned: his complexion was dark, and his eye black and penetrating. His countenance was invincibly grave, like that of Cassius, who read much, and never smiled; and this trait is the more remarkable, as he was distinguished for his good humoured hilarity. In his deportment, he was dignified and commanding, without austerity or hauteur.

The grave of this eminent man is covered by a white marble slab, upon which are inscribed his name and age, with the brief but noble epitaph,—
"AN HONEST MAN."

WILLIAM WHIPPLE.

WHIPPLE.

It was a solid cement to the great revolutionary fabric, that its principal architects emanated from almost all the various classes of society. Constructed with this variety of materials, each of which served to impart strength and durability to the others, it continued to rise in height and grandeur, until it towered above the ruins of royalty, and became a perfect and impregnable edifice.

But, among all the nurseries of civil society, that of the sailor appears least likely to impart the necessary mental nutriment to qualify an individual for the duties of a statesman. A common English education, or rather the rudiments of it, and a knowledge of navigation, without including its more abstruse principles, are, in general, the extreme limits of a seaman's literary ambition. The beauties of philosophy and letters are as little known to him as the cause which guides his needle to the pole. He receives from books none of that elasticity of thought, and tendency to reflection, which might serve to

relieve the monotony of his mode of life, and open his mind for the reception of expanded views, and general conceptions. His home is upon the ocean, and when he transiently treads upon his native land, his time is filled with pleasures and private affairs. He seldom reflects upon the political condition of his country, and possesses neither leisure nor opportunity to feel as a patriot. His education deprives him of the brilliant examples of history, which might serve to rouse his enthusiasm, and his necessary absence keeps him in ignorance of all national affairs which do not practically and directly interfere with his maritime prosperity. Exiled, as it were, to the bosom of the deep, and "from the social ways of men cut off," his march of mind becomes stationary at a certain point, and the benefits derivable from intercourse with society, are lost to him. His ship is his world, and mankind, for him, is compressed within the number of his crew. The routine of his duties and his actions is unvaried, and even his nautical knowledge is limited by custom or capacity.

Such are the reflections excited by a contemplation of the life of William Whipple, whose early days were employed in the drudgery of a seafaring life, and whose maturer years were devoted to the service and welfare of his country.

William Whipple, the father of our present subject, was a native of Ipswich, in Massachusetts, and was bred a maltster. Having removed to Kittery in Maine, he followed the sea, during several years. He married Mary, the eldest daughter of Robert Cutt. Her grandfather, Robert Cutt, was a brother of John Cutt, the president of New Hampshire, and emigrated from England to the West Indies, where he married a wealthy widow, who died soon after. He then married Mary Hoet, an English lady, who had removed to the West Indies. Soon after their marriage they came to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and subsequently removed to Kittery, where Mr. Cutt established a ship-yard, and carried on the business of ship-building very extensively. They had two sons, Richard and Robert, and four daughters. Robert married Dorcas Hammond, the daughter of major Joseph Hammond, whose father, having been an adherent of Oliver Cromwell, left England on the death of the protector, came to this country and settled in Kittery. They had four daughters; Mary, the wife of William Whipple; Catharine, who married John Moffat, a merchant, who then resided at Kittery, but afterwards removed to Portsmouth; Mehitable, who married Jotham Odiorne, merchant of Portsmouth; and Elizabeth, who married the Rev. Joseph Whipple, the

brother of William Whipple, and who settled in the ministry at Hampton Falls.

Mr. Cutt possessed a large estate, and his daughter, Mrs. Whipple, inherited from him a very valuable farm in Kittery, situated on the eastern branch of the Piscataqua river, opposite to the island where the navy yard is now established, and within view of the town of Portsmouth. Mr. Whipple now abandoned his nautical pursuits, and resided on this estate, which he held in right of his wife, where he employed himself as a farmer and maltster. Mrs. Whipple was a lady of excellent sense, agreeable manners, and many pleasing accomplishments. They had five children; William, Robert, Joseph, Mary, and Hannah. Robert died when he was about nineteen years of age: Joseph was educated in the compting-room of Nathaniel Carter, a merchant of Newburyport, and established himself in business in Portsmouth, in company with his brother: they continued their mercantile connexion until a short time previous to the commencement of the revolutionary war. He was afterwards appointed collector of the port of Portsmouth, first by the state of New Hampshire, and after the adoption of the federal constitution, by the president of the United States: he held this office, with a short intermission, until a few months before

death. He died without issue, on the twenty-sixth of February, 1816, in the seventy-eighth year of his age. Mary Whipple, the eldest daughter, married Robert Trait, Esquire, comptroller of the port of Portsmouth previous to the revolution. They had three children, Robert, William, and Mary: Robert and William went to Europe, where they settled; and Mary married Kieth Spencer, Esquire, a merchant from Scotland who settled in Portsmouth. Captain Robert T. Spence, their son, holds a distinguished rank in the navy of the United States. Hannah Whipple, the youngest daughter, married the Hon. Joshua Brackett, an eminent physician in Portsmouth, who, during the revolution, was judge of the maritime court of New Hampshire. Her mother, Mary Whipple, resided with her after the death of her husband, and died in 1783, at the advanced age of eighty-five years.

William Whipple, the eldest son of William Whipple, was born at Kittery, in the year 1730. He received his education in one of the public schools in that town, where he was taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and navigation. Such was the restricted nature of his studies, and the narrow advantages he derived, at that period of life when the mind is best fitted to receive the seeds of knowledge. When this deficient course of tuition was

completed, he left school, and embarked immediately on board of a merchant vessel, for the purpose of commencing his destined profession as a sailor. Before he was twenty-one years of age, he obtained the command of a vessel, and, in that capacity, performed a number of voyages to Europe, and to the West Indies. It is to be lamented that the maritime career of captain Whipple was polluted by a blemish, which all his civil and military services cannot totally efface. It is not our wish to expatiate upon the miseries of the slave-trade; it is a crime so abhorrent to humanity, and so accursed of God, that no pen can touch upon its horrors with moderation. Mr. Whipple, according to the practice too prevalent at that time, engaged in this infamous traffic, and imported slaves from Africa into this country. Let us hope that the false, but plausible, opinion that what is authorised by law and custom cannot be wrong, together with the multitude of surrounding examples, and the youthful age of Mr. Whipple, induced him to embark in a trade, which, when asserting, at a subsequent period, the universal principles of liberty in the council and in the field, he must assuredly have condemned, as subversive of the foundation upon which the rights and efforts of his own country were established.

In the year 1759, he abandoned the sea, being then in the twenty-ninth year of his age, and engaged in business in Portsmouth, with his brother, under the firm of William and Joseph Whipple. This connexion was discontinued about one or two years previous to the revolution.

Mr. Whipple married his cousin, Catherine Moffat, one of the daughters of John Moffat, Esq: his offspring was limited to one child, which died in its infancy. He resided in the family of his father-in-law from the time of his marriage until his death.

At an early period of the contest, he took a decided part in favour of the colonies, in their opposition to the claims of Great Britain; and his townsmen, placing the highest confidence in his patriotism and integrity, frequently elected him to offices which required great firmness and moderation. In January, 1775, he was chosen one of the representatives of the town of Portsmouth to the provincial congress, held at Exeter for the purpose of choosing delegates to the general congress, which was to meet in Philadelphia on the tenth of May following.

When the disputes between the two countries were approaching to a crisis, the provincial committee of safety of New Hampshire recommended

that a provincial congress should be formed, for the purpose of directing and managing the public affairs of the state during the term of six months. The delegates from the town of Portsmouth were five in number, among whom was captain Whipple. He accordingly attended the meeting of the congress, which convened at Exeter in the beginning of May, 1775, and was elected by that body one of the provincial committee of safety, who were to regulate the affairs of government during the war. In the early part of the same year, he was also chosen one of the committee of safety for the town of Portsmouth.

At the close of the year 1775, the people of New Hampshire assumed a form of government, consisting of a house of representatives and a council of twelve, the president of which was the chief executive officer. Mr. Whipple was chosen one of the council, on the sixth of January, 1776, and on the twenty-third of the same month, a delegate to the general congress: he took his seat on the twenty-ninth of February following. He continued to be re-elected to that distinguished situation in the years 1777, 1778, and 1779, and applied himself with diligence and ability to the discharge of its duties, when the military services which he rendered during that period, permitted him to be an

acting member of the New Hampshire delegation. In the middle of September, 1779, he finally retired from congress, after having attended, without the least intermission, at his post of duty, from the fifth of the preceding month of November.

The memorable day which gave birth to the Declaration of Independence, afforded, in the case of Mr. Whipple, a striking example of the uncertainty of human affairs, and the triumphs of perseverance. The cabin-boy, who, thirty years before, had looked forward to the command of a vessel as to the consummation of all his hopes and wishes, now stood amid the congress of '76, and looked around upon a conclave of patriots such as the world had never witnessed. He, whose ambition once centered in inscribing his name as commander upon a crew-list, now affixed his signature to a document which has embalmed it for posterity.

During the several sessions of congress which he attended, he was considered a very useful and active member, and discharged the duties of his office in a manner alike honourable to himself and satisfactory to his constituents. In the current and committed business of the house, he displayed equal perseverance, ability, and application. His early pursuits rendered him particularly useful as a member of the committees of marine and of commerce;

and, as one of the superintendants of the commissary's and quarter-master's departments, he laboured, with much assiduity, to correct the abuses which had prevailed, and to place those establishments upon such a footing as might best conduce to the public service. When the depreciation of the continental currency became excessive, he strongly opposed new emissions of paper, as tending to the utter destruction of public confidence. In a letter addressed to Nathaniel Peabody, Esq. and dated Portsmouth, 22d November, 1779, he expresses his opinion upon the subject: "What principally engrosses the attention of this town is the fear of starving by means of the regulating schemes. I cannot put a cord of wood in my yard for less than one hundred dollars, and other articles of produce are nearly in the same proportion. In short, people seem to be all running mad; but I hope they will come to their senses again some time or other; but that is not to be expected till a final stop is put to paper emissions. That measure, I have some hopes, will check the depreciation of morals as well as of paper currency."

The high consideration in which his services were held by that body, did not accompany Mr. Whipple in his retirement from congress. In the beginning of the year 1780, he was appointed a

commissioner of the board of admiralty, which office he declined accepting, owing to the situation of his private affairs. In a letter of the seventh of Februry, 1780, he thus expresses himself to the Hon. Nathaniel Peabody, in relation to this appointment. "I am confident that your wishes that I would accept the office you mention, are founded on the best principles, viz. the public good; though I am not altogether so clear that you would not be mistaken. No doubt some other person may be found that will fill the place much better; at least this is my sincere wish, for I have nothing more at heart than our navy. The official account of my appointment did not reach me till some time in January, although the letter was dated the 27th November; this may account for my answer's being so long delayed: Indeed, I took a fortnight to consider the matter before I gave my answer, and I assure you I considered it very maturely; and, in casting up the account, I found the balance so greatly against it, that I was obliged, on the principle of self-preservation, to decline."

In the year 1777, Mr. Whipple was called upon to act in untried scenes, and exchange his political for a military character. He had buffeted the winds and the waves as a seaman, pursued the peaceful occupations of a merchant, and acted with distinc-

tion as a statesman, and he now sought to gather the laurels of a warrior. The overwhelming force of Burgoyne having compelled the American troops to evacuate their strong post at Ticonderoga, universal alarm prevailed in the north. The committee of the New Hampshire grants, which had now formed themselves into a separate state, wrote in the most pressing terms to the committee of safety at Exeter, for assistance. The assembly of New Hampshire was immediately convened, and adopted the most effectual and decisive measures for the defence of the country. They formed the whole militia of the state into two brigades, giving the command of the first to William Whipple, and of the second to John Stark. General Stark was immediately ordered to march "to stop the progress of the enemy on our western frontiers," with one-fourth of his brigade, and one-fourth of three regiments belonging to the brigade of Gen. Whipple.

Burgoyne, presuming that no more effectual opposition would be made, flattered himself that he might advance without much annoyance. To the accomplishments and experience of his officers, was added a formidable train of artillery, with all the apparatus, stores, and equipments, which the nature of the service required. His army was principally composed of veteran corps of the best troops of

Britain and Germany, and American loyalists furnished it with spies, scouts, and rangers: a numerous body of savages, in their own dress and with their own weapons, and characteristic ferocity, increased the terrors of its approach. Flushed by a confidence in his superior force, and deceived in his opinion of the number of friendly loyalists, the British general despatched lieutenant-colonel Baum from fort Edward, with about fifteen hundred of his German troops, and a body of Indians, to pervade the Grants as far as the Connecticut river, for the purpose of collecting horses to mount the dragoons, and cattle, both for labour and provisions. He was encountered at Bennington by the intrepid Stark, who carried the works which he had constructed, by assault, and killed or captured the greater part of his detachment; a few, only, escaped into the woods, and saved themselves by flight.

This victory gave a severe check to the hopes of the enemy, and revived the spirits of the people, after a long depression. The courage of the militia increased with their reputation, and they found that neither British nor German regulars were invincible. Burgoyne was weakened and disheartened by the event, and beginning to perceive the danger of his situation, he now considered the men

of New Hampshire and the Green Mountains, whom he had viewed with contempt, as dangerous enemies: in a letter, written about this time, he remarks to lord Germaine, that "the New Hampshire Grants, till of late but little known, hang like a cloud on my left."

The northern army was now reinforced by the militia of all the neighbouring states. Brigadier-general Whipple marched with a great part of his brigade; and volunteers from all parts of New Hampshire, hastened in great numbers to join the standard of general Gates. In the desperate battles of Stillwater and of Saratoga, the troops of New Hampshire gained a large share of the honour due to the American army. The consequence of these engagements was the surrender of general Burgoyne. When the British army capitulated, he was appointed, with colonel Wilkinson, as the representative of general Gates, to meet two officers from general Burgoyne, for the purpose of propounding, discussing, and settling several subordinate articles and regulations springing from the preliminary proposals of the British general, and which required explanation and precision before the definitive treaty could be properly executed. By concert with major Kingston, a tent was pitched between the advance guards of the two armies,

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where they met lieutenant-colonel Sutherland, and captain Craig of the forty-seventh regiment, on the afternoon of the 16th October, 1777. Having produced and exchanged credentials, they proceeded to discuss the objects of their appointment, and in the evening signed the articles of capitulation. After the attainment of this grand object, general Whipple was selected as one of the officers, under whose command the British troops were conducted to their destined encampment on Winter-hill, near Boston.

General Whipple was attended on this expedition by a valuable negro servant, named Prince, whom he had imported from Africa, many years before. On his way to the army, he told his servant that if they should be called into action, he expected that he would behave like a man of courage, and fight bravely for his country. Prince replied, "Sir, I have no inducement to fight; but if I had my liberty, I would endeavour to defend it to the last drop of my blood." The general manumitted him upon the spot. This anecdote is related by the marquis de Chasteleux in his "Travels in North America," but is erroneously applied to governor Langdon, who was in company with general Whipple at the time, but had no negro servant with him.

In the summer of 1778, when count D'Estaing had abandoned his project of attacking the British fleet at New York, he appeared before Newport, in order to co-operate with general Sullivan in the reduction of Rhode Island. The American army lay on the main, near the town of Providence, when the French fleet arrived. The neighbouring states had been called upon for reinforcements of militia, and general Whipple joined general Sullivan with his detachment from New Hampshire. On the ninth of August, the American troops effected a landing on the north end of the island, sir Robert Pigott having withdrawn his outposts, and concentrated his force, amounting to six thousand men, in an entrenched camp near Newport. The arrival of the militia had augmented the troops of general Sullivan to ten thousand men, and a plan of immediate attack was concerted with the French admiral, when a British fleet appeared off the island. The count D'Estaing determined to stand out to sea, and give the enemy battle: the French fleet sailing out of port with a wind which blew directly on the British, lord Howe considered the weather-guage to be too great an advantage when added to their superior weight of metal, and he determined to contend it with all the skill and judgment he possessed. He, therefore, weighed

anchor and stood out to sea: he was followed by D'Estaing, and both fleets were soon out of sight.

General Sullivan now determined to open the trenches and immediately commence the siege of Newport, which continued several days without any material occurrence. No intelligence being received from the admiral, the situation of the American army became extremely critical, but their anxieties were momentarily relieved on the evening of the nineteenth, by the re-appearance of the fleet. A violent storm had separated the two fleets when upon the point of engaging, and count D'Estaing, on his arrival at Newport, in a very shattered and disabled condition, immediately despatched a letter to general Sullivan, announcing his intention of proceeding without delay to Boston to refit, pursuant to his orders from the king, and the advice of all his officers. This communication threw Sullivan into despair, as success was hopeless without the co-operation of the French fleet. Notwithstanding the arguments, the intreaties, and the protest of the American officers, and the remonstrances of La Fayette, the count persisted in his determination; and, abandoning his allies to difficulties and dangers, set sail for Boston.

The conduct of D'Estaing cast a fatal damp over the spirits of the American troops, and the militia

became so disheartened by his departure, that in a few days, the army was reduced, by desertion, to little more than five thousand men. General Sullivan now determined to raise the siege, and retire and fortify himself on the north end of the island. The camp before Newport was, therefore, broken up in great silence, on the night of the twenty-eighth of August, and the retreat was effected with the whole of the artillery and baggage. On the morning of the twenty-ninth, a pursuit was ordered by sir Robert Pigott, and the whole day was spent in skirmishes, which terminated in a sharp action in front of the American encampment. This conflict was obstinately maintained for half an hour, when the British gave way, and retreated to Quaker-hill, where they had first formed. The next day a cannonade was kept up by both armies, but neither thought proper to attack the other. General Sullivan, having received certain information that a large body of troops had sailed for the relief of Rhode Island, determined to retreat to the continent. Having manifested during the day every disposition to maintain his ground, he performed a timely and masterly retreat during the night, his measures being so judiciously taken, that his whole army had crossed over, and disembarked near Tiverton, by two o'clock in the morning, without-

having created in the enemy the slightest suspicion that he had contemplated the movement which was now completed. The next day a British reinforcement, consisting of four thousand men, arrived, commanded by sir Henry Clinton in person.

On the morning of the thirtieth of August, whilst a number of officers were at breakfast in the general's quarters, at the position on the north end of the island, the British advanced to an eminence about three quarters of a mile distant; perceiving horses and a guard before the door, they discharged a field-piece, which killed one of the horses, and the ball, penetrating the side of the house, passed under the table where the officers were sitting, and shattered the leg of the brigade-major of general Whipple's brigade, in such a manner that amputation was necessary.

As the design for calling out the militia had proved abortive, many of them were discharged, and general Whipple, with those under his command, returned to New Hampshire. According to the pay-roll for the general and staff of his division of volunteers, it appears that he took the command on the twenty-sixth of July, and retired on the fifth of September, 1778.

In the year 1780, immediately after his retirement from congress, he was elected a member of

the legislature, to which office he was repeatedly chosen, and continued to enjoy the confidence and approbation of his fellow citizens.

In May, 1782, the superintendant of finance, confiding in "his inclination and abilities to promote the interests of the United States," appointed Gen. Whipple receiver for the state of New Hampshire, a commission at once arduous and unpopular. It was invariably the rule of Mr. Morris to grant this appointment only to men of tried integrity and invincible patriotism. The duty of the office was not only to receive and transmit the sums collected in the state, but to expedite that collection by all proper means, and incessantly to urge the local authorities to comply with the requisitions of congress. The station now held by Mr. Whipple was, therefore, extremely irksome, not only from the urgent and necessary representations to the legislature and the people, but from the total want of success which attended his most persevering efforts. So shameful was the sluggishness of the state in the payment of revenue, that it was necessary, six months after the first instalment became due, to remit money to New Hampshire for the purpose of finishing a single ship on the stocks at Portsmouth. The discouraging result of his exertions, induced him, on the third of August 1783, to repeat more

strongly his desire to abandon an office, the powers and effects of which were so little desirable. But Mr. Morris was not disposed to lose the services of a faithful and able agent, without an effort to shake his determination. "If," he remarked in a letter of the nineteenth August, 1783, "a number of competitors would appear, I am well persuaded that you would not have accepted. Your original motives must continue to exist, until the situation of our affairs shall mend. Persist, then, I pray you, in those efforts which you promise me, and be persuaded that the consciousness of having made them will be the best reward. If this is not the case, I have mistaken your character." Let it be remembered that an eulogium from Robert Morris should be equally venerated as though it had fallen from the lips of Washington: the military glory of the hero can never be separated from the gigantic talents of the financier.—It was not until the month of January, 1784, that Mr. Whipple was enabled to make his first remittance to the treasury: this, at a time when the public necessities were most urgent, consisted of three thousand dollars! At length, he was resolved no longer to submit to the series of vexations which he had endured for more than two years, and which the infirm state of his health rendered still more oppressive. On the

twenty-second of July, 1784, he imparted his final determination to Mr. Morris, and retired from the office of receiver in the course of the following month.

A dispute had long subsisted between the states of Pennsylvania and Connecticut, relative to certain lands at Wyoming, which, from the hostile spirit in which it was conducted, demanded the serious consideration of congress. On the sixteenth of July, 1782, it was resolved that the agents of those states should appoint commissioners or judges to constitute a court for hearing and determining the matter in question, agreeably to the ninth article of the confederation. On the eighth of August, this requisition was complied with, and Mr. Whipple was included in the commission subsequently granted by congress. The court of commissioners met at Trenton, in New Jersey, on the twelfth of November, but did not constitute a quorum until the eighteenth; when William Whipple, Welcome Arnold, David Brearly, William Churchill Houston, and Cyrus Griffin, Esqrs. having taken the necessary oaths, opened the court in form. Mr. Whipple was appointed president, and throughout the course of this important and delicate trial, which terminated on the thirtieth of December, displayed great ability, impartiality, and moderation. Their

final sentence and decree was returned to congress on the third of January, stating it as the unanimous opinion of the court, that the state of Connecticut had no right to the lands in controversy.

About this period, general Whipple began to be afflicted with strictures in the breast, which, at times, proved extremely painful. A little exercise would induce violent palpitations of the heart, which were very distressing. Riding on horseback often produced this effect, and frequently caused him to faint and fall from his horse. This complaint prevented him from engaging in the more active scenes of life, and compelled him to decline any further military command.

On the twentieth of June, 1782, he was appointed a judge of the superior court of judicature; it being usual, at that period, to fill the office with persons who had not been educated in the profession of the law. The bench consisted of four judges, and the chief justice only was taken from the bar. A discerning mind, sound judgment, and integrity, were deemed adequate, but essential, qualifications; and these virtues were possessed by general Whipple. In an attempt to sum up the arguments of the counsel, and state a cause to the jury, the effort brought on the palpitation of his heart, in so vio-

lent a degree, that he proceeded with great difficulty; and this was the only instance of his making a formal speech, whilst seated upon the bench. He continued, however, to ride the circuits with the court for the term of two or three years, and assisted his brethren with his opinion in the decision of the causes before them.

On the twenty-fifth of December, 1784, he was appointed a justice of the peace and quorum throughout the state, under the new constitution. In the fall of 1785, the rapid increase of his disorder compelled him to leave the court, and return home before the circuit was completed. He was immediately confined to his chamber, and the nature of his complaint preventing him from lying in bed, his only refreshment from sleep was received whilst sitting in a chair. The nature and violence of his disorder being beyond the reach of medical art, he expired on the twenty-eighth day of November, 1785, in the fifty-fifth year of his age.

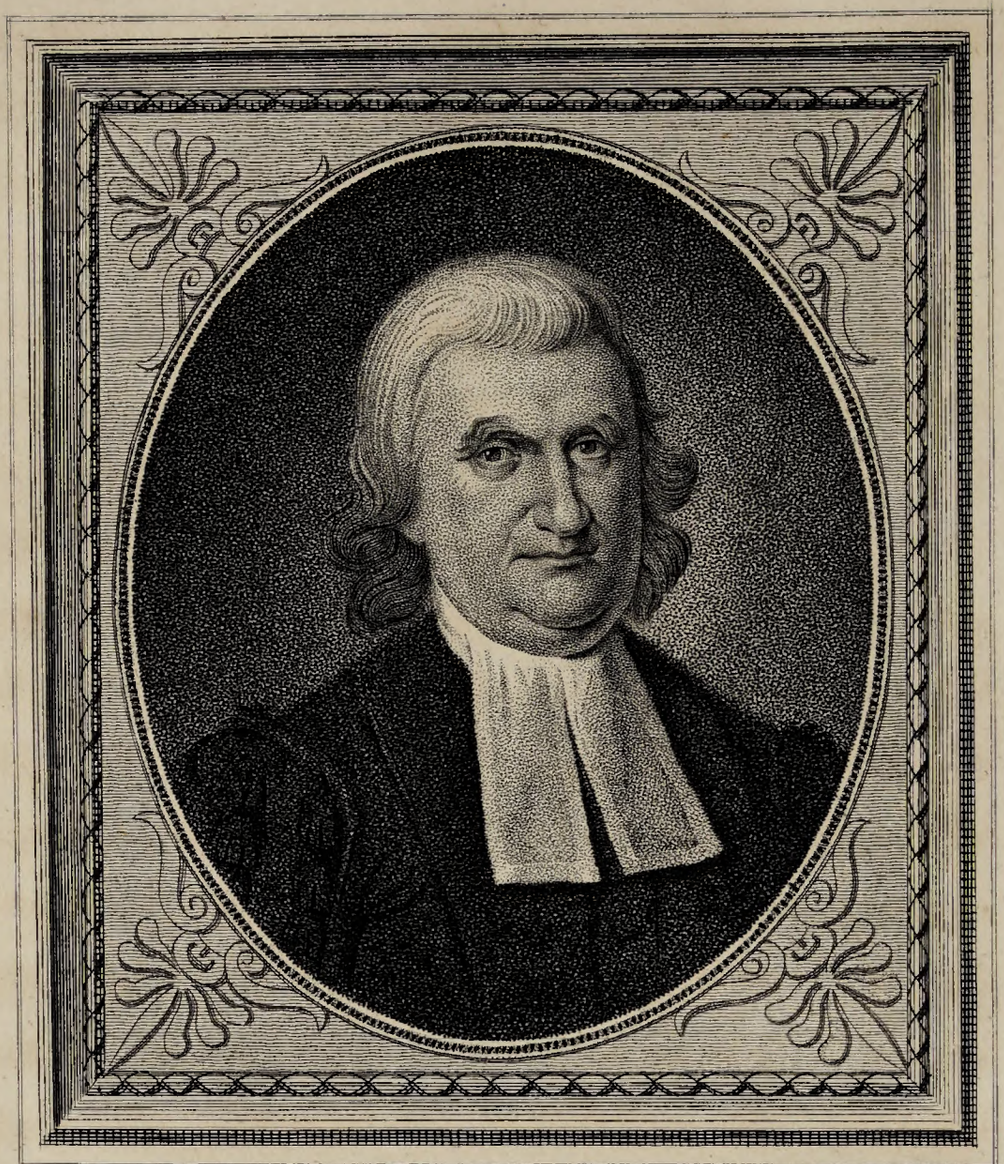
His body was opened, by his special direction, and it was found that an ossification had taken place in his heart; the valves being united to the aorta, a small aperture, about the size of a large knitting needle, remained open, through which all the blood flowed in its circulation; and when any sudden

motion gave it new impulse, it produced the palpitation and faintness to which he was liable. His body was deposited in the north burying-ground, in Portsmouth.

General Whipple was possessed of a strong mind, and quick discernment: he was easy in his manners, courteous in his deportment, correct in his habits, and constant in his friendships. He enjoyed through life a great share of the public confidence, and although his early education was limited, his natural good sense, and accurate observations, enabled him to discharge the duties of the several offices with which he was entrusted, with credit to himself and benefit to the public. In the various scenes of life in which he engaged, he constantly manifested an honest and persevering spirit of emulation, which conducted him with rapid strides to distinction. As a sailor, he speedily attained the highest rank in the profession; as a merchant, he was circumspect and industrious; as a congressman, he was firm and fearless; as a legislator, he was honest and able; as a commander, he was cool and courageous: as a judge, he was dignified and impartial; and as a member of many subordinate public offices, he was alert and persevering. Few men rose more rapidly and worthily in the scale of society, or bore their new honours with more modesty and propriety.

Such was William Whipple, whose memory will be long cherished in New Hampshire, and whose name, united with the great charter of our freedom, will perish only with the records of the Republic.

JOHN WITHERSPOON.



JOHN WITHERSPOON.

Engraved by J.B. Longacre from a Painting by C.W. Peale.

WITHERSPOON.

No combination in the mind of man forms a more certain foundation for useful virtue than that of piety and patriotism. When the love of country is tempered and guided by Christian principles, its scope of usefulness becomes proportionally more extensive. The pious man possesses a firmness and serenity of soul which peculiarly qualify him to vanquish difficulties, and contemplate with calmness the approach of danger. Free from that impassioned enthusiasm, which plunges headlong into extremes, and leads into inextricable labyrinths, he advances with a determined step, weighing his progress with caution and deliberation. Bending his passions to the dominion of reason, he regulates all his motions according to the divine principles which predominate over all others in his estimation; and founding his political creed upon this immutable basis, he becomes the safest sentinel on the watch-tower of liberty, and the surest, because

the most deliberate, champion of his country's rights. It was a distinguished feature in the American revolution that religious feeling was closely connected with political action. The perscutions which compelled our forefathers to seek the unshackled enjoyment of those feelings in the wilderness of the western world, were still fresh in the recollection of their descendants, and they continued, both by public and private acts, to appeal to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intentions, and to place a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence.

Among those who united the gospel ministry with the labours of the patriot, was JOHN WITHERSPOON, a man not less distinguished in the church than in the annals of America. This eminent individual was born in the parish of Yester, near Edinburg, on the fifth of February, 1722. His parentage was respectable, and the family had long possessed a considerable landed estate in the east of Scotland. He was lineally descended from the reverend John Knox, the hero of the reformation in Scotland, whose daughter, Elizabeth, married the celebrated John Welsh, a minister who rivalled his father-in-law in genius, piety, and zeal: in this line, Dr. Witherspoon descended from his honourable ancestry.—His father was a clergyman in the church of

Scotland, and minister of the parish of Yester: his piety, learning, and many able qualities, contributed, in a great degree, to form the mind of his son in the mould of virtue, and inculcate the taste, simplicity, and literary accuracy, for which he was so deservedly distinguished. Doctor Witherspoon always expressed a high sense of his parent's goodness, particularly with regard to the pains which he took in his education for the gospel ministry.

He was placed, at a very early age, at the public school in Haddington, where he rapidly advanced in learning, and acquired reputation for the native soundness of his judgment, the quickness and clearness of his conception, and the assiduity with which he prosecuted his studies. Many of those, who, as fellow-students, admired the inchoation of his genius, subsequently attained the highest stations in the literary and political world. At the age of fourteen years, he was removed to the university of Edinburg, where he attained great credit for his diligence in the different branches of learning. In the theological hall, he particularly evinced a taste in sacred criticism, a precision of thought, and a perspicuity of expression, which were very uncommon, and rarely attained at his early period of life. He continued in the university until the age of twenty-

one years, when he was licensed to preach the gospel.

Immediately on the completion of his studies, he was invited to become assistant-minister to his father, in Yester, with the right of succession to the charge; but he preferred an invitation from the parish of Beith in the west of Scotland, where he was ordained, and settled, with the universal approbation of his congregation. Interesting and instructive in the pulpit, he faithfully fulfilled all his other parochial duties, and attracted even the fervent attachment of the people. His discourses generally embraced those great and practical truths of the gospel, which most affect and attract the hearts of an audience.

In the beginning of the year 1746, Dr. Witherspoon became involved in a very awkward situation, the particulars of which are highly interesting. The battle of Falkirk was fought on the seventeenth of January, and he, with several other individuals, who were present from curiosity alone, was taken prisoner in the general sweep which the rebels made after the battle, and confined in the castle of Doune. The place of his abode was a large ghastly room, the highest part of the castle, and next the battlements. In one end of this room there were two small vaults or cells, in one of which

he passed the night, together with five members of the Edinburg company of volunteers, taken prisoners in the action of the 17th, and two citizens of Aberdeen, who had been taken up in the north country, as spies, and threatened to be hanged by the rebels: in the other cell were also eight persons, suffering, like himself, the effects of injudicious curiosity.—Each of the cells had a door which might be made fast by those on the inside when they went to sleep, having straw to lie upon, and blankets to cover them, which they had purchased from some people in the village of Doune.

The principal object which employed the thoughts of the prisoners was the most practicable means of escape. A centinel, who stood two or three paces from the door of the room, allowed any of them that pleased to go up to the battlements, which were about seventy feet high; and it was proposed to make a rope of the blankets, by which they might descend from the battlements to the ground, on the west side of the castle, where there was no centinel. This proposal, which originated from one of the volunteers, was agreed to by them, and by the two men of Aberdeen. Dr. Witherspoon said that he would go to the battlements and see what happened; and that, if they succeeded, he would probably follow their example.—The rope

being finished, and the order of descent adjusted, they went up to the scene of action, and having fastened it, began to descend about one o'clock in the morning. The first four reached the ground in safety, but the fifth man, who was very tall and big, going down in a hurry, the rope broke with him just as his feet touched the ground. The lieutenant, standing by the wall of the castle, called to the volunteer, Thomas Barrow, whose turn it was to descend next, not to attempt it, as twenty or thirty feet were broken off from the rope. Notwithstanding this warning, which he heard distinctly, he put himself upon the rope, and going down as far as it lasted, let go his hold; as soon as those below saw him upon the rope, (for it was moonlight,) they put themselves under him to break his fall, which, in part, they did; but falling from so great a height, he brought them both to the ground, dislocated one of his ankles, and broke several of his ribs. He was conveyed by his companions, with great difficulty to Tullyallan, a village near the sea, where they procured a boat to carry them off to the Vulture sloop of war, then lying at anchor in the Frith of Forth.

Neil Macvicar, one of the volunteers, and Dr. Witherspoon, were now left standing on the battlements. The former had drawn the last number,

and believing, from the disaster of his friends, that the rope was not strong enough, he pulled it up, and carried it to the cell, where there were some blankets, with which he completed it, beginning at the place where it had given way, and adding a good deal to its thickness. He then returned to the battlements, fastened the rope, and put himself upon it: he went down very well until he reached that part of the rope where he had added so much to its thickness that his hand could not grasp it, and falling from the same height that Mr. Barrow had done, but having nobody to break his fall, was so grievously hurt, bruised, and maimed, that he never recovered, but languished and died soon after at the house of his father, who was a clergyman in the island of Isla.* Dr. Witherspoon prudently declined this dangerous attempt, and patiently awaited his liberation in a safer manner.

After residing a few years in Beith, he was translated to the large and flourishing town of Paisley, justly celebrated for the extent, variety, and fineness, of its manufactures. Here he lived in high reputation and great usefulness, enjoying and deserving the affections of his people, until he was called to the presidency of the college of New Jersey. His

* Home's Works: Hist. of Rebellion, 1745, vol. iii, p. 169, 175.

talents were so extensively known and so justly appreciated, that, during his residence at Paisley, he was invited to Dublin, to assume the charge of a numerous and respectable congregation in that city; and also to Rotterdam, in the United Provinces, and to Dundee, in his own country. But, although he could not, at that time, be induced to abandon a sphere of so much usefulness, comfort, and respectability, he was, happily for this country, subsequently persuaded to listen to the invitation from a distant colony; thus distinctly proving how little regardful he was of personal interest when opposed to what he conceived to be the claims of duty. Another evidence of the pure and disinterested motives which induced him to leave the scene of his happiness and honour, is contained in the loss of fortune which it involved. Not long before he left Scotland, and while in a state of suspense on the subject of emigration, a gentleman, possessed of a large property, an old bachelor, and a relation of the family, agreed to make him his heir, provided he would not go to America.

On the nineteenth of November, 1766, the trustees of the college of New Jersey unanimously elected Dr. Witherspoon to the office of president, and transmitted a letter to Richard Stockton, Esq. a member of the board, then in London, requesting

him by personal application to solicit a compliance with the wishes of the trustees. Party views and feelings, were, at this period, mingled with the management of the college, and such representations of its state were made to Doctor Witherspoon, as were calculated to induce him to refuse the presidency; and this effect was actually produced, until his misapprehensions were removed by an agent of the board.—On the first of October, 1767, a letter from Doctor Witherspoon was communicated to the trustees, in which he declined an acceptance of the presidentship of the college. This refusal, however, was not occasioned by the discouraging accounts which had been transmitted to Scotland relative to the state of the institution: his unfavourable impressions in that respect, which at first were very strong, had been entirely removed. To dissolve connexions at home, that had been so long endeared to him,—to violate all the attachments and habits of the female part of his family,—to abandon the theatre of his happiness and fame,—and, in the prime of life, to bury himself, as it were, in a new and distant country,—were sorrowful and weighty considerations. But the reluctance of Mrs. Witherspoon to leave her native country, was the principal cause of his refusal, at this time. She was afterwards perfectly reconciled

to his removal; and with the affection and piety for which she was eminently distinguished, cheerfully accompanied her husband to a foreign country, with no expectation of ever returning to "the land of her father's sepulchres."

Urged by the representations of those friends whose judgment he most respected, and whose friendship he most esteemed, and animated by the hope that he might repay his sacrifices by greater usefulness in the ministry, and in the interests of learning in the new world, he finally resolved to waive every other consideration, to cross the ocean, and to assume the important charge to which he had been called by the concurrent wishes of all the friends of the college. On the ninth of December, 1767, Mr. Stockton informed the board of trustees, that the difficulties which had prevented Doctor Witherspoon's acceptance of the presidentship, were now removed; and that, upon a re-election, he would consider it a duty to enter into that public service. This intelligence was received with peculiar satisfaction, and he was immediately and unanimously re-elected.—About two months before, Dr. Samuel Blair had been appointed president, but, having ascertained that the re-election of Doctor Witherspoon would secure his services and influence in favour of the college, he made a prompt

and voluntary tender of his resignation, and thus prevented the embarrassment in which the board of trustees might otherwise have been involved. Doctor Witherspoon considered this act as an instance of disinterestedness and generosity, highly creditable to Mr. Blair.

Doctor Witherspoon arrived with his family in Princeton, in August, 1768, and on the seventeenth of that month, was inaugurated at a special meeting of the board of trustees. He was the sixth president of the college, from its foundation in 1746; his predecessors, Dickenson, Burr, Edwards, Davies, and Finley, were deservedly celebrated for their genius, learning, and piety. The fame of his literary character, which had preceded him to this country, brought a great accession of students to the institution. This influence was greatly increased by the circumstance of his being a foreigner; but his reputation was widely extended, and he enjoyed an additional advantage by introducing the more recent improvements in the system of education. When he assumed his office, his prudence, talents, and weight of character, not only put an end to party measures in the board of trustees, but greatly contributed to produce the same effect in the councils of the church to which he belonged.

One of the first benefits which the college received from the appointment of its new president, was the augmentation of its funds, which, from a variety of causes, were then in a low and declining condition. At that period, it had never enjoyed any resources from the state, but was entirely dependent on private liberality and zeal. The reputation of Doctor Witherspoon excited fresh generosity in the public, and his personal exertions, which extended from Massachusetts to Virginia, rapidly improved its finances, and placed them in a flourishing condition. It was, indeed, afterwards prostrated by the Revolutionary war, which almost annihilated its resources; but the friends of learning must recollect, with gratitude, how much that institution owed to his enterprise and talents. The principal advantages, however, which it derived, were from his literature; his mode of superintendency; his example as a happy model of good-writing; and the tone and taste which he gave to the literary pursuits of the college.

The piety, erudition, knowledge of the world, and deep insight into human nature, possessed by Doctor Witherspoon, qualified him, in an eminent degree, for the station which he now filled; and no man was more prompt and popular as presiding officer of a literary institution. In addition to the

benefits derived from his great reputation, by the accession of students, and the formation of funds, he endeavoured to establish the system of education in the college, upon the most extensive and respectable basis that its situation and finances would permit. The course of instruction had formerly been too limited; and its metaphysics and philosophy were strongly tinctured with the dry and uninstructive forms of the schools. This, however, was not to be imputed, as a defect, to those excellent men, who had previously presided over the institution: it rather arose from the recent origin of the country, the imperfection of its social condition, and the state of its literature. Mathematical science received, during his presidency, an extension that was before unknown in the college. He introduced into philosophy, all the most liberal and modern improvements of Europe; and extended the philosophical course, so as to embrace the general principles of policy and public law. He incorporated with it, sound and rational metaphysics, equally remote from the doctrines of fatality and contingency, from the barrenness and dogmatism of the schools, and from the excessive refinements of those contradictory, but equally impious, sects of scepticism, which wholly deny the existence of matter, or maintain that nothing but matter exists,

in the universe. He laid the foundation of a course of history; and the principles of taste, and the rules of good writing, were as happily explained by him, as they were exemplified in his manner. It is believed that he was the first man who taught, in America, the substance of those doctrines of the philosophy of the mind, which Doctor Reid afterwards developed with so much success.—He caused an important revolution in the system of education, whereby literary inquiries and improvements became more liberal, more extensive, and more profound. An admirable faculty for governing, and exciting the emulation of, the youth committed to his care, contributed to the success of his various efforts to perfect the course of instruction. The great number of men of eminent talents, in the different liberal professions, who received from him the elements of their education, is the best evidence of his services in the college. Under his auspices, a large proportion of the clergy of the Presbyterian church was formed; and to his instructions, America owed many of her most distinguished patriots and legislators.* He introduced a system of public voluntary competitions among the students, in the various branches of study pursued

* Rodger's Funeral Discourse.

in the college. One of these consisted in translating any given phrase of English, into Latin, on the spot, and without previous preparation; and in an extemporaneous exercise in writing Latin, for the completion of which a short specified time of a few minutes only were allowed: The competition in Greek was only in reading, translating, and analysing the language.—Thus, faithfully and perseveringly, he continued to guide the course of education in the institution over which he presided, until the revolutionary war suspended his functions, and dispersed the college.

When the academical shades were deserted, Doctor Witherspoon found himself introduced into a new field of labour, and he appeared in a character widely different from any in which he had heretofore been presented to the public. Yet this new scene gave fresh lustre to his fame; and his talents as a legislator portrayed, in vivid colours, the extent and variety of his mental abilities. Casting aside his foreign prejudices, and embracing with facility the ideas and habits of a new country, and a new state of society, he became an American the moment he landed on our shores. Being opposed, in principle, to the unjust pretensions of the British government, he adopted the views, and participated in the councils, of the colonists, in the

earliest stages of the contest. The citizens of New Jersey, who knew and valued his distinguished talents, soon selected him as one of the most suitable delegates to the convention which formed their republican constitution in 1776. The professors of the law were lost in astonishment, when he appeared, in this respectable assembly, as profound a civilian, as he had before been known to be a philosopher and divine.

After having taken an active and decided part in the revolutionary committees and conventions of the state, he was smmoned to the discharge of more important duties. On the twenty-first of June, 1776, the provincial congress of New Jersey, reposing special confidence in his integrity and patriotism, elected him a delegate to the general legislature, with instructions to unite with the delegates from the other colonies, in declaring them to be independent of the mother country, should such a measure be considered necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties. Doctor Witherspoon took his seat in congress, a few days previous to the fourth of July, and assisted in those important deliberations which resulted in that deed of noble daring, which severed the two countries forever. When a distinguished member of congress said that we were "not yet ripe for a declaration of

independence," Doctor Witherspoon replied, "in my judgment, sir, we are not only ripe but rotting."

During the sessions of 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, 1781, and 1782, he continued to represent the state of New Jersey in the general congress, with unyielding zeal and perseverance. It is recorded as an evidence of his devotion to public affairs, that he sometimes attended in his seat, without the least intermission, during the whole period of his annual appointments. Such close attendance was not required by his constituents, nor was it of common occurrence, even in that season of heroism and self-denial. The state governments duly regarded the private affairs, and provided for the relaxation, of the members, by appointing supernumerary congressional delegates, of whom a certain number was empowered to act as their representatives. From New Jersey they were generally five in number, but two formed a full delegation; thus, by apportioning their official term, the weight of political labour became comparatively light, and the division afforded to each member, a remission from duty, during many months in the year. This retirement, however, was entirely optional, and Dr. Witherspoon never permitted any personal considerations to interfere with the course of his official duties. In the month of

November, 1782, he finally retired from congress, after a long series of important services. The energy, promptitude, and talents, which he displayed in every branch of public business that required his attention, and the political wisdom and experience with which he enriched the national council, attracted the confidence and admiration of his colleagues, and elevated him, with rapidity, to the first ranks among the assembled sages and senators of America. He was always firm in the most gloomy and formidable aspects of public affairs, and always discovered the greatest power and presence of mind in the most embarrassing situations. But the glorious struggle, in which he had participated, was drawing to an honourable conclusion, and sensibly feeling, as a sexagenarian, the advances of age, he resolved to resign his seat in congress; and, had he not deemed his continued exertions an imperative duty, would have gladly retired, in some measure, from the burdens of the college. While he was engaged in serving his country in the character of a civilian, he did not lay aside his ministry. He eagerly embraced every opportunity of preaching, and of discharging the various duties of his station as a gospel minister, which he considered as his highest honour. Nor would he ever consent, as some other clerical members of congress did, to

change, in any particular, the dress which distinguished his order.

It is impossible to specify the numerous services in which he was engaged, during his long continuance in congress, but he participated largely in the toils of the arduous and expensive mode of prosecuting the public business, adopted by that body, in the appointment of boards and committees. His talents as a politician had been thoroughly tested, previous to his emigration, as leader of the orthodox party in the church of Scotland; and he was fully prepared to play a much more important part on the theatre of our grand revolution, than by displaying his eloquence and sagacity in the presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies, of Scotland. His powers of memory were of vast importance to him in congress: he often remarked that he could precisely repeat a speech, or sermon, written by himself, by reading it over only three times. The management of his memory, and its best application to the interests of the cause, were skilfully conducted. He seldom entered fully into any debate at first, but reserved himself for a concentrated effort: having made himself master of his subject, he methodically composed a speech, committed it to memory, and delivered it in congress. Being a ready speaker, and possessing a remarkable talent

for extemporaneous discourse, he prefaced his written orations by replying to some previous speaker, and dexterously proceeding with his prepared speeches, astonished the whole house by the regular arrangement of his ideas, his command of language, and his precision on subjects of importance.

On the seventh of October, 1776, he was appointed a member of the secret committee, the duties of which required indefatigable attention, and were of the first importance in the prosecution of the war. In the following month, congress took into consideration the lamentable state of the army, which, dispirited by losses and fatigues, was retreating almost naked and barefooted, in the cold of November, before a numerous, well appointed, and victorious army, through a desponding country, "much more disposed to secure safety by submission, than to seek it by a manly resistance." A great number of the troops had disbanded, the terms of service of many others had nearly expired, and the army was melting away under the influence of this fatal and universal cause. Little hope existed of retaining them after they possessed a legal right to be discharged, nor of supplying their places with other recruits. This rapid enfeebling of a feeble army, accelerated by the numerous desertions of the Pennsylvania militia, contributed to the

general opinion that the contest was approaching its termination; and that no efforts of the commander-in-chief could arrest the progress of the enemy in their march towards Philadelphia. The national legislature, finding the army on the eve of dissolution, and aware of the fearful results which might be produced by a dependence on militia, always a more expensive but less efficacious aid than regular forces, resolved to use every exertion to prevent its farther dismemberment. The commanding general, commissioners, and officers, were conjured to recruit, by every means in their power, the regiments whose terms of service had expired, and Doctor Witherspoon, Mr. Paca, and Mr. Ross, were appointed a committee to repair to headquarters, and co-operate with general Washington in this important business: they were also empowered to inquire into, and redress, to the utmost of their power, the grievances of the soldiers.

On the twelfth of December, congress retired to Baltimore, and a general expectation prevailed that no effectual resistance could be made to the advance of the enemy. But the bold and unexpected attacks made at Trenton and Princeton, had a most extensive influence on the fate of the war, and created a confidence in the body of the people, that proper exertions on their part would be

crowned with ultimate success: they saved Philadelphia for the present winter; they recovered the state of New Jersey; they revived the drooping spirits of America; and they gave a sensible impulse to the recruiting service throughout the United States. The firmness manifested by congress during the gloomy and trying period which intervened between the loss of fort Washington, and the battle of Princeton, entitles the members of that day to the admiration of the world, and the gratitude of their compatriots. Unawed by the dangers with which they were threatened, and regardless of personal safety, they did not, for an instant, admit the idea that the independence they had declared, was to be surrendered, and peace purchased by returning to their ancient colonial situation. As the British army advanced through Jersey, and the consequent insecurity of Philadelphia rendered an adjournment of congress a necessary measure of precaution, their exertions seemed to increase with their difficulties. When re-assembled at Baltimore, their resolutions exhibited no evidences of confusion or dismay; and the most judicious efforts were made to repair the mischiefs produced by past errors in the military system. They sought to remove the despondency which was seizing and paralysing the public mind, by an

address to the states, in which every argument was suggested which could rouse them to vigorous action.* This nervous and eloquent appeal was prepared by a committee, consisting of Dr. Witherspoon, Mr. Richard Henry Lee, and Mr. Adams; who, at the same time, were charged with framing a recommendation to the several states, to appoint a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. In the year 1777, he continued to serve on various important committees, and was particularly active as a member of the board of war.

On the twenty-first of January, 1778, the board of war submitted a report to congress, relative to American prisoners in the power of the enemy, stating, in substance, that about nine hundred privates, and three hundred officers, were then in the city of New York;—that the former had been crowded all the summer in sugar-houses, and thirty of the latter confined in the provost-guard, and in the most loathsome gaols;—that, since the beginning of October, all these prisoners, both officers and privates, had been confined in prison-ships, or the provost;—that the general allowance of provisions did not, at the most, exceed four ounces of meat, and the same quantity of bread per man, daily;—

* Marshall's Life of Washington, vol. 2, chap. viii.

that the prisoners had been usually treated with unparalleled cruelty, and with the most studied and illiberal insult;—that it had been a common practice with the enemy, on the first capture of a prisoner, to keep him three, four, and even five days, without a morsel of provisions of any kind, and then to tempt him to enlist with the new levies, in order to save his life;—that there were numerous instances of prisoners perishing in all the agonies of hunger, from their severe treatment;—and, that being generally stripped, when taken, of the clothes in their possession, they suffered greatly for the want of them, during their confinement. Many other facts were stated, which excited universal indignation and abhorrence. This development of the brutal rigour and insults experienced by their fellow citizens, excited the strongest sensations in congress, and a series of energetic resolutions were immediately adopted, directing an equal number of the enemy's officers and privates, to be subsisted, imprisoned, and treated, in the same manner as the American prisoners were subsisted, imprisoned, and treated, by the British. The treatment received by the prisoners in the hands of congress, had previously afforded an honourable contrast to the barbarities exercised in New York. They had been plentifully supplied with provisions, and permitted

to reside, and purchase, without control, within the jurisdiction of the states; the officers had been suffered to live, on their parole, in good quarters, receiving a weekly allowance of two dollars from congress; and few, even of the privates, had been, for any length of time, confined in gaol, but, on the contrary, were allowed to work abroad, and receive the price of their labour. Congress also appointed a committee, consisting of Dr. Witherspoon, Mr. J. B. Smith, Mr. Lovel, and Mr. G. Morris, to prepare a manifesto on the injurious treatment received by the American prisoners. On the thirtieth of the following October, this eloquent protestation was promulgated by the unanimous consent of congress. From the fervid strain of piety in which it is couched, and the solemnity of the appeals to "that Being who is equally the Father of All," it would seem to be the work of one of His ministers; and it may, perhaps, be safely assumed to be the production of Dr. Witherspoon.* It concludes in the following manner: "While the shadow of hope remained that our enemies could be taught by our example, to respect those laws which are held sacred among civilized nations, and to com-

* It is known that the admirable publications of congress, calling their constituents to seasons of fasting and prayer, came from the pen of Dr. Witherspoon.

ply with the dictates of a religion which they pretend, in common with us, to believe and revere, they have been left to the influence of that religion and that example. But, since their incorrigible dispositions cannot be touched by kindness and compassion, it becomes our duty, by other means, to vindicate the rights of humanity.—We, therefore, the congress of the United States of America, do solemnly declare and proclaim, that if our enemies presume to execute their threats, or persist in their present career of barbarity, we will take such exemplary vengeance as shall deter others from a like conduct. We appeal to that God who searcheth the hearts of men, for the rectitude of our intentions; and in his holy presence, declare, that as we are not moved by any light and hasty suggestions of anger or revenge, so, through every possible change of fortune, we will adhere to this our determination."

On the twenty-seventh of August, 1778, Dr. Witherspoon was appointed, together with Robert Morris, Elbridge Gerry, Richard Henry Lee, and Gouverneur Morris, to consider the state of the money and finances of the United States, and report thereon, from time to time; and on the twenty-fifth of November, he submitted to congress, powers to the delegates of New Jersey to ratify the articles

of confederation and perpetual union. On the subsequent day, he signed that feeble instrument, which, however, was not rendered complete until the accession of the state of Maryland, on the first of March, 1781. In the year 1779, he particularly distinguished himself as a member of the committee appointed to devise means for procuring supplies for the army, in which duty he was ably assisted by the financial knowledge of Gouverneur Morris, and the economical principles of Roger Sherman.

Numerous applications had been made to congress, on the part of the states of New York and New Hampshire, praying their interference in quelling the disturbances and animosities among the inhabitants of the district entitled the New Hampshire Grants; and, on the twenty-second of May, 1779, the delegates from New York, proposed a series of resolutions on the subject. They urged that both New Hampshire and New York, at the time when the United States were subject to the crown of Great Britain, exercised jurisdiction over the inhabitants of the district, who now refused their allegiance, and attempted to constitute themselves into a separate state, under the assumed name of Vermont. They further maintained that the thirteen acknowledged states were severally entitled to, and ought to be supported in, the pos-

session of all the lands and territories which appertained of right to each of them while subject to the British king; and that no part of one or more of the United States ought to be permitted to separate therefrom, and become independent thereon, without the express consent and approbation of such state, or states, respectively. On the first of June, congress resolved to appoint a committee to repair to the inhabitants of the New Hampshire Grants, and investigate the causes of their refusal to continue citizens of the respective states which previously exercised jurisdiction over them: they instructed the committee to confer with the people, and to adopt every prudent measure to promote an amicable settlement of the existing differences, and to prevent divisions and animosities so prejudicial to the interests of the United States. On the succeeding day, Dr. Witherspoon, with four other members, any three of whom were empowered to act, was appointed to execute this delicate and important mission; and, as congress anticipated very salutary effects from the exertions of their delegates, all further consideration of the subject was postponed until they made their report. Dr. Witherspoon acted in this business with his usual ability and circumspection, and on the thirteenth of July, he, together with his colleague, Mr. Atlee, laid

before congress an account of their proceedings in the north. It happened, however, that a majority of the committee did not meet in the district which they were appointed to examine, and the duty being, of course, informally executed, no regular report was ever made to congress. But the practical information gathered by him, during the excursion, was, doubtless of great advantage in the deliberations of that body, in the long and intricate arrangement of this revolting affair, which, at one period, endangered the internal peace of the country.

Iterating the impracticability of designating, and commenting on, the varied and incessant services performed by Dr. Witherspoon, during his public career, and of analysing the whole extent and power of his political ideas, it may with justice be observed, that, on almost all subjects respecting which he differed from his brethren in congress, his principles have been justified by the result. A few examples are offered in support of this opinion; restricted, however, to his opposition to the expensive mode of supplying the army by commission,—to the emission of paper-currency,—and to his ideas touching the inefficacy of the original confederation.

It was the custom of congress, in the first years of the war, to supply the army by allowing a certain commission per cent. on the monies expended by the commissioners. This stipulated commission, granted as a compensation to the commissary, was founded, in a great measure, on the prejudices entertained against the system adopted by Great Britain for procuring supplies by contract. Dr. Witherspoon was uniformly and strongly opposed to this wasteful system, which, indeed, after some time, excited great disgust. It was considered as an inducement to purchase for the continent at high prices, because the purchaser thereby enhanced his own emoluments. On the twenty-eighth of May, 1779, the board of treasury submitted a report to congress, in which, after declaring it to be impracticable, in their opinion, to carry on the war by paper emissions, at the existing enormous expenses of the commissary-general's, quarter-master-general's, and medical, departments, they stated that an universal opinion prevailed, that one cause of the alarming expenses in those departments was the commissions granted to the numerous persons employed in purchasing for the army; and that a very general dissatisfaction had taken place on that account among the citizens of the United States: hence they recommended that the

departments referred to, should be placed on a different footing, with respect to the expenditure of public money. A committee being appointed to devise a plan of retrenchment, the officers who were thus publicly exposed to censure, became dissatisfied and indignant. Colonel Wadsworth, the commissary-general of purchases, tendered his resignation; and a similar spirit prevailed among a portion of his deputies and agents. A conciliatory resolution of congress, expressing their full confidence in the integrity and abilities of the heads of the departments, and their speedy intention of adopting measures to distinguish the faithful from the unfaithful among their agents, secured, for a time, the farther services of Mr. Wadsworth, and calmed the agitation which prevailed among his inferior officers.

The committee appointed on the twenty-eighth of May, made their report on the ninth of July, 1779, which resulted in nothing more than an earnest request to the executive powers of the several states, to make a strict inquiry into the conduct of the agents of the relative departments, to remove or suspend those guilty of misbehaviour and to appoint substitutes.—The lamentable state of the army towards the close of the year 1779, threatened with actual famine, and perishing with cold, togeth-

er with the enormous debts contracted by the public agents, and the total destruction of their credit, demanded the most serious attention of congress. A new arrangement was, therefore, made on the first of January, 1780, whereby the commissary-general was to receive a fixed nominal salary in the paper currency. But this system was so modified, that it increased, instead of diminishing, the embarrassments of the department; and it was soon found difficult to obtain suitable assistants and agents for the compensation allowed. The crisis now arrived. Colonel Wadsworth advised General Washington, in the month of January, 1780, that, having neither money nor credit, it was out of his power longer to supply the army with meat; and the assistant-commissary, residing in camp, gave notice, that his stock of provisions was on the point of being exhausted, and that he had no immediate prospect of a further supply. In this critical situation, the commander-in-chief was compelled, however disagreeable, to make a requisition on each county in the state of New Jersey, for a certain quantity of meat and flour, and to threaten that, if they did not voluntarily afford the relief required within six days, the extremity of the case would oblige him to resort to impressment. Let it be remembered, in justification of a severe but unavoida-

ble measure, that the patient and heroic army had been, sometimes, five or six days together without bread; at other times, as many days without meat; and once or twice, two or three days without either; and that, at one time, the soldiers eat every kind of horse-food but hay; we may truly say, in the words of Washington, that being "bereft of every hope from the commissaries, nothing but this great exertion could have saved the army from dissolution, or starving."*

This important subject was frequently the object of legislative consideration until the beginning of 1781, when a great and judicious revolution took place in the civil executive departments, by the appointment of a secretary for foreign affairs, a secretary at war, a secretary of marine, and, above all, of a superintendant of finance. The improvement and regulation of the finances;—the establishment of order and economy in the expenditure of the public money;—and the direction and control of all persons employed in procuring supplies for the public service;—were a part of the duties assigned to the last mentioned officer; the execution of which rescued the country from ruin, and exalted a Morris to the rank and grandeur of a Washington.—In all

* Letter to general Schuyler.

his financial arrangements, Mr. Morris found a warm supporter in Dr. Witherspoon, particularly with respect to the decrease of the army expenditures. He strenuously combatted the old mode of supplying the army, until, after a long experience of its ill-effects, he, in conjunction with Mr. Morris, and a few firm and judicious associates, prevailed on congress to have it done by contract; or by allowing to the purchaser, a certain sum per ration. This useful and economical measure was adopted on the tenth of July, 1781, when the superintendant of finance was authorised to procure, on contract, all necessary supplies for the use of the army, or armies of the United States, and also for the navy artificers and prisoners of war.

After the first, or second, emission, Doctor Witherspoon resolutely opposed, (and even hazarded his popularity by the strenuousness of his opposition,) all farther issues of the paper currency which inflicted so deep a wound on public credit, and occasioned so much private distress. To liquidate the expenses of the war, immense sums were emitted in bills of credit, and the same method was adopted by the respective states to provide for their internal wants. At length this paper currency, unsupported by solid funds, and resting solely on public credit, was multiplied beyond the rules of

sound policy, and having exceeded the useful demand for it as a medium of commerce, it became proportionably reduced. The arts of open and of secret enemies, the disgraceful avidity of professed friends, and the scarcity of foreign commodities, were assigned by congress as additional causes of the depreciation of the currency, which involved consequences equally obvious and alarming. Depravity of morals, injustice to individuals, a precarious supply for the war, the decay of public virtue, the debasement of the public faith, and the destruction of the honour, safety, and independence of the United States, constituted the long train of evils to be apprehended from that depreciation.—On the twenty-third of June, 1775, the first emission of two millions of dollars took place; and on the twenty-ninth of November, 1779, the date of the final issue, the aggregate of the bills, then in circulation, amounted to two hundred of millions of dollars: of this sum 63,500,300, dollars were emitted in the year 1778, and 140,052,480, dollars, in 1779. This vast quantity of bills had been unavoidably issued at a time when no regular civil governments existed possessing sufficient energy to enforce the collection of taxes, or to provide funds for their redemption.

The rapid depreciation of the continental currency was long viewed with fear and anxiety by the judicious friends of the revolution, and various unsuccessful expedients were essayed for the purpose of checking its progress. The original plan of sinking the bills by apportioning the amount among the several states, totally failed; and the confidence placed in the public authorities was so limited, that it was found necessary, five months after the first emission, to appoint a committee to take into consideration the refusals to receive in payment, or give currency to, the bills that had been issued. On the eleventh of January, 1776, it was resolved that if any person refused to receive those bills in payment, or endeavoured to obstruct and discourage the currency or circulation thereof, he should be considered, published, and treated, as an enemy of his country, and precluded from all trade or intercourse with the inhabitants of the colonies; and, on the fourteenth of January, 1777, it was decreed, that whosoever should offer, ask, or receive more, in the said bills, for any gold or silver coins, bullion, or any other species of money, than the nominal amount thereof in Spanish milled dollars; or more, in the said bills, for any lands, houses, or goods, than the same could be purchased at, in gold, silver, or any other species of money; or should

offer to sell any goods or commodities for gold or silver coins, or any other species of money, and refuse to sell the same for the said continental bills;—every such person ought to be deemed an enemy to the liberties of the United States, and to forfeit the value of the money so exchanged, or house, land, or commodity, so sold or offered for sale. It was also recommended to the state legislatures to enact laws inflicting penalties to prevent such pernicious practices; and making the bills of credit issued by Congress, a legal tender in payment of public and private debts; and a refusal thereof, an extinguishment of such debts.—To aid in restoring the utility, if not the credit, of the continental currency, it was earnestly recommended to the legislatures of the respective states to regulate and ascertain the price of labour, manufactures, internal produce, and commodities imported from foreign countries, and to authorise proper agents to take from any engrossers, forestallers, or other persons possessed of a larger quantity of any such commodities or provisions than were competent for the private annual consumption of their families, and who refused to sell the surplus at the regulated prices, paying only those prices for the same. The states were also earnestly requested to refrain from further emissions of bills of credit, to call in their pa-

per-money in circulation, and cancel it by loans or taxes, and in future to provide for the exigencies of war, and the support of government, in that manner.

Numerous other expedients were unsuccessfully resorted to by congress, to check this growing evil, and provide for the current expenses of the war. Among these were the establishment of loan offices, the large quotas demanded from the several states, the requisitions made on them, the redemption of certain emissions, and their acceptance in payment of debts and taxes by the continental treasurer, the cessation of emissions, and decrease of the quantity of bills in circulation. As a specimen of the little reliance and astonishing lukewarmness of the states, the requisition of thirtieth October, 1781, is produced: at the close of the year 1783, only 1,486,511 dollars and 71 cents had been received at the treasury. Another requisition of two millions, made in October, 1782, was so little regarded, that the superintendant of finance found it better to receive and credit the paltry payments tendered, as part of the previous requisition for eight millions. On the thirteenth of September, 1779, the national debt amounted in bills of credit, and foreign and domestic loans, to 197,682,985 dollars: at that period, the taxes paid into the treasury

only amounted to 3,027,560 dollars, and the sum of the loans received was 33,734,105; so that the aggregate of the monies supplied to congress by the people of America was no more than 36,761,665 dollars. Such were the difficulties to which that body was exposed by the negligence of the state governments, whose dilatory compliance with the requisitions and recommendations of congress, originated those enormous emissions of paper-currency, two hundred millions of which were sunk in the hands of their constituents.

Congress, finding their utmost efforts unavailing, at length determined, by their resolutions of the first and third, of September, 1779, that it was inexpedient to derive the supplies for a continuance of the war from emissions of bills of credit. The sum in circulation being now 159,948,880 dollars; they further resolved, on no account whatever, to emit a greater additional amount than would complete the sum of two hundred millions; and to issue such part of the balance only, being 40,051,120, as might be absolutely necessary for public exigencies, before adequate supplies could be obtained from the states: the whole amount, however, was completed and expended, in less than three months from this time.

This decisive act, however, produced no effect in repairing the credit of a currency, whose diminution in value arose from the vast quantity in circulation: it was, in fact, impossible not to anticipate depreciation, and preposterous to endeavour to correct it, while a community consisting of three millions, was flooded with an unfunded paper currency amounting to two hundred millions.—At length, "the first great and deliberate breach of public faith," as it was styled by Dr. Witherspoon, was committed by the act of eighteenth March, 1780, making silver and gold receivable in payment of the state quotas, at the rate of one Spanish milled dollar in lieu of forty dollars of the paper currency. This "act of bankruptcy," as the duke de Vergennes was pleased to call it, was followed by new estimates of depreciation, of seventy-five and one hundred and fifty, for new state paper, which was itself sunk to two or three for one. Its decline became more rapid as its total dissolution approached, an event in which the number of sufferers was almost co-equal with the amount of the American population.

All the talents and influence of Dr. Witherspoon were opposed to this destructive system of emissions, in every stage of its progress; and he denounced it as precisely adapted, if any thing could

do it, to defeat the revolution. Instead of the issues of unfunded paper, beyond a certain quantum, he urged the propriety of making loans, and establishing funds for the payment of the interest;—and deeply has America lamented that this policy had not been pursued. He subsequently, at the instance of some of the very gentlemen who opposed him in congress, published his ideas on the nature, value, and uses of money, in one of the most clear and judicious essays that had, perhaps, ever been written on the subject.

The argumentative eloquence of Dr. Witherspoon, and his few associates, was unable to check those measures of congress in relation to the finances, tending to destroy public credit, which, although unavoidable in principle, he believed to be susceptible of salutary modifications. His remarks on the interest of loan-office certificates, will convey some idea of indignant and powerful opposition to all measures calculated to depress public credit, and widen the breach of public faith. On the tenth of September, 1777, congress determined that the interest arising on all loan-office certificates issued, or to be issued, before the first of March, 1778, should be annually paid in bills of exchange on the United States' commissioners in Paris. On the twenty-eighth of June, 1780, it was resolved that

all loans that had been made to the United States, should be finally discharged, by paying the full current value of the bills when loaned, in Spanish milled dollars;—ascertaining the value of the said bills at the date of the loans, by computing thereon a progressive rule of depreciation, commencing with the first day of September, 1777, and continuing, in geometrical progression, from period to period, to the eighteenth of March, 1780. The depreciation, at the several periods, was established as follows:

March 1, 1778, one dollar and three quarters of continental currency for one Spanish milled dollar.

September 1, 1778; as four of the former for one of the latter.

March 1, 1779; as ten of the former for one of the latter.

September 1, 1779; as eighteen of the former for one of the latter.

March 18, 1780; as forty of the former for one of the latter.

At the same time, it was determined that the principal of all certificates taken out after the eighteenth of March, 1780, should be discharged at the rate of one Spanish milled dollar for forty dollars of the continental bills of credit: on the eighth of November, the interest on all loan-office certifi-

cates, after the twenty-eighth of June, was made payable according to the same rule of depreciation.

While the resolutions for discontinuing the payment of interest on loans by bills on Europe, for the performance of which congress stood formally pledged by their act of tenth September, 1777, was under consideration, Dr. Witherspoon addressed the house in opposition to the full adoption of the measure. He admitted that it might probably be unavoidable in the circumstances to which congress was reduced; but the step was so full of importance, and its consequences so teeming with danger, that a strict scrutiny ought to be instituted, whether any possible addition could be made to it, which might, in some degree, prevent the evils to be apprehended, or, at least, exculpate congress, and convince the public that it proceeded from absolute necessity. "Sir," said he, "if we enter into these resolves as they stand, it will be a deliberate deviation from an express and absolute stipulation, and, therefore, it will give the last stab to public credit. It will be in vain, in future, to ask the public to believe any promise we shall make, even when the most clear and explicit grounds of confidence are produced. Perhaps it will be said that public credit is already gone; and it hath been said that there is no more in this, than in neglecting to

pay the loan-office certificates of later date; but though there were no other differences between them, this being another and fresher instance of the same, it will have an additional evil influence on public credit. But, in fact, there is something more in it than in the other: the solemn stipulation of congress, specifying the manner in which the interest was to be paid, was considered as an additional security, and gave a value to these certificates which the others never had. Now it is plain, that the particular promise of giving bills upon Europe, as it had an effect, and was intended to have it, in procuring credit, it must, when broken, or withdrawn, operate in the most powerful manner to our prejudice." After adverting to the depreciation of the currency, and the utter ruin of many within his knowledge, who, relying on the most solemn protestations of congress, that the money should be ultimately redeemed, dollar for dollar, had sold their estates at what they thought a high price, he thus continued: "I cannot help requesting congress to attend to the state of those persons who held the loan-office certificates which drew interest on France: they are all, without exception, the firmest, and safest, friends to the cause of America; they were in general the most firm, and active, and generous, friends. Many of them

advanced large sums of hard money, to assist you in carrying on the war in Canada. None of them at all put away even the loan-office certificates on speculation, but either from a generous intention of serving the public, or from an entire confidence in the public credit." "Nothing can be more unequal and injurious, than reckoning the money by the depreciation, either before or after the first of March, 1778; for a great part of the money in all the loan-offices, was such as had been paid up in its nominal value, in consequence of the tender laws. This points you, Sir, to another class of people, from whom money was taken; viz. widows and orphans, corporations and public bodies. How many guardians were actually led, or indeed were obliged, to put their depreciated and depreciating money in the funds:—I speak from good knowledge." Having stated some instances of this nature, he proceeds: "Now it must be known to every body, that since the payment of the interest —bills gave a value to these early loans, many have continued their interest in them, and rested, in a manner, wholly on them for support. Had they entertained the slightest suspicion that they would be cut off, they could have sold them for something, and applied themselves to other means of subsistence; but as the case now stands, you are reducing

not an inconsiderable number of your very best friends to absolute beggary. During the whole period, and through the whole system of continental money, your friends have suffered alone;—the disaffected and lukewarm have always evaded the burthen,—have, in many instances, turned the sufferings of the country to their own account,—have triumphed over the whigs,—and, if the whole shall be crowned by this last stroke, it seems but reasonable that they should treat us with insult and derision. And what faith do you expect the public creditors should place in your promises of ever paying them at all? What reason, after what is past, have they to dread that you will divert the fund which is now mentioned, as a distant source of payment? If a future congress should do this, it would not be one whit worse than what has been already done." He then expatiated on the consequences which would immediately follow this resolution;—the most insulting abuse from the enemy; the accusations of the most oppressive tyranny, and grossest fraud; the poisoning of the public mind by making congress ridiculous and contemptible; and the rage and disappointment of their plundered, and long ruined, friends, which, from the effect of power and circumstances in all great and fierce political contentions, might burst forth in furious and violent

efforts of despair. "Must this be risked," he exclaimed, "at a crisis when the people begin to be fatigued with the war, to feel the heavy expense of it, by taxes; and when the enemy, convinced of their folly in their former severities, are doing every thing they can to ingratiate themselves with the public at large? But, although our friends should not be induced to take violent and seditious measures all at once, I am almost certain it will produce a particular hatred and contempt of congress, the representative body of the union, and a still greater hatred of the individuals who compose the body at this time. One thing will undoubtedly happen, that it will greatly abate the respect which is due from the public to this body, and therefore weaken their authority in all other parts of their proceedings.—I beg leave to say, Sir, that in all probability it will lay the foundation for other greater and more scandalous steps of the same kind. You will say, what greater can there be? Look back a little to your history. The first great and deliberate breach of public faith, was the act of eighteenth March, 1780, reducing the money to forty for one, which was declaring that you would pay your debt at six-pence in the pound,—but did it not turn? No: by and by it was set, in this state and others, at seventy-five, and finally at one hun-

dred and fifty, for one, in new paper and in state paper, which in six months rose to four for one. Now, Sir, what will be the case with these certificates? Before this proposal was known, their fixed price was about half a crown for a dollar, of the estimated depreciated value; when this resolution is fairly fixed, they will immediately fall in value, perhaps to a shilling the dollar,—probably less. Multitudes of people in despair, and absolute necessity, will sell them for next to nothing, and when the holders come at last to apply for their money, I think it highly probable you will give them a scale of depreciation, and tell them they cost so little, that it would be an injury to the public to pay the full value. And in truth, Sir, supposing you finally to pay the full value of the certificates to the holders, the original and most meritorious proprietors will, in many, perhaps in most, cases, lose the whole." After depicting, in a masterly manner, the effect which the adoption of this measure would have on foreign nations, the contemptible light in which this country would be placed by it, and the folly of supposing that other sovereigns would suffer their subjects, who held certificates, to be plundered in so wanton and extravagant a manner, he asks with what face congress could expect to receive credit in foreign parts, and in future

loans, after having so notoriously violated every engagement which it had hitherto made?—and concludes by commenting on the facility of procuring funds from our own citizens, if they could but lay a foundation for public credit. "All these things, Mr. President," said he, in concluding, "proceed upon certain and indubitable principles, which never fail of their effect: Therefore, you have only to make your payments as soon, as regular, and as profitable, as other borrowers, and you will get all the money you want; and, by a small advantage over others, it will be poured in upon you, so that you shall not need to go to the lenders, for they will come to you."

Doctor Witherspoon warmly maintained the absolute necessity of union, to impart vigour and success to the measures of government; and he strongly combatted the opinion expressed in congress, that a lasting confederacy among the states, for their future security and improvement, was impracticable. He declared that such sentiments were calculated greatly to derange the minds of the people, and weaken their efforts in defence of the country. "I confess," said he, "it would to me greatly diminish the glory and importance of the struggle, whether considered as for the rights of mankind in general, or for the prosperity and hap-

piness of this continent in future times. It would quite depreciate the object of hope, as well as place it at a greater distance. For what would it signify to risk our possessions, and shed our blood, to set ourselves free from the encroachments and oppression of Great Britain, with a certainty, as soon as peace was settled with them, of a more lasting war,—a more unnatural, more bloody, and much more hopeless, war among the colonies themselves? —Some of us consider ourselves as acting for posterity at present, having little expectation of living to see all things fully settled, and the good consequences of liberty taking effect. But how much more uncertain the hope of seeing the internal contests of the colonies settled upon a lasting and equitable footing?"—"If, at present, when the danger is yet imminent, when it is so far from being over, that it is but coming to its height, we shall find it impossible to agree upon the terms of this confederacy, what madness is it to suppose that there ever will be a time, or that circumstances will so change as to make it even probable, that it will be done at an after season? Will not the very same difficulties that are in our way, be in the way of those who shall come after us? Is it possible that they should be ignorant of them, or inattentive to them? Will they not have the same jealousies of

each other, the same attachment to local prejudices, and particular interests? So certain is this, that I look upon it as on the repentance of a sinner;—every day's delay, though it adds to the necessity, yet augments the difficulty, and takes from the inclination."

A sentiment expressed in this debate, that it was to be expected from the nature of men, that a time must come when a confederacy would be dissolved and broken to pieces, and which seemed to create an indifference as to the success of the measure, produced the following burst of eloquence: "I am none of those who either deny, or conceal, the depravity of human nature, till it is purified by the light of truth, and renewed by the spirit of the living God. Yet I apprehend there is no force in that reasoning at all. Shall we establish nothing good, because we know it cannot be eternal? Shall we live without government, because every constitution has its old age, and its period? Because we know that we shall die, shall we take no pains to preserve, or lengthen out, life? Far from it, Sir:—it only requires the more watchful attention to settle government on the best principles, and in the wisest manner, that it may last as long as the nature of things will admit." Doctor Witherspoon concluded his eloquent arguments in favour of a

well-planned confederation, in the following terms: "For all these reasons, Sir, I humbly apprehend that every argument from honour, interest, safety, and necessity, conspire in pressing us to a confederacy; and if it be seriously attempted, I hope, by the blessing of God upon our endeavours, it will be happily accomplished."

But, although he supported the necessity of a well organized system of union, he opposed and lamented, in the subsequent formation of the original confederation, the jealousy and ambition of the individual states, which were unwilling to intrust the general government with adequate powers for the common interest. He passed judgment of inefficacy upon it, at the moment of its birth; but he complained and remonstrated in vain. The ratification of this instrument was obtained with much difficulty. The various amendments proposed by the states, in some instances conflicting with each other, at length successively yielded to the opinion that a federal compact would be of great importance in the prosecution of the war. On the first of March 1781, this interesting compact, to the great joy of America, was rendered complete. But it was not productive of all the benefits which its sanguine advocates had expected, and the predictions of Dr. Witherspoon were speedily and fear-

fully fulfilled. On the third day of February, a short time previous to the completion of the confederacy, he made a fresh attempt to enlarge the powers of congress, and establish a permanent fund for discharging, in part, the principal and interest of the national debt. He urged that it was indispensably necessary that congress should be vested with the right of superintending the commercial regulations of every state, so that none might take place inimical to the common interest; and that they should be vested with the exclusive right of laying duties on all imported articles;—no restriction to be valid, and no such duty to be laid, without the consent of nine states. On the question to agree to this motion, with certain restrictions, it was decided in the negative; and a resolution was substituted, and passed on the same day, *recommending* to the several states, as indispensably necessary, to vest a power in congress to levy a duty of five per cent. ad valorem on certain imported articles, for the use of the United States. This recommendation was never complied with. Had the policy proposed by Doctor Witherspoon been pursued, a large share of the difficulties which ensued, would have been evaded. But a disposition in the members of congress, growing inevitably out of the organization of the government, to consult the will of the states

from which they were delegated, and perhaps to prefer their accommodation to any other object, however essential to the whole, had discovered itself at an early period, and had gained strength with time. Hence the nation was thrown at the feet of the states, where the vital principle of power, the right to levy taxes, was exclusively placed; and it was scarcely possible to advance a single step, but under the guidance of the respective states.

Doctor Witherspoon had many able coadjutors to support his particular and incessant remonstrances against the tardy, insufficient, and faithless manner of providing for the public exigencies and debts, by requisitions on the states. He insisted on the propriety and necessity of the government of the union holding in its own hands the entire regulation of commerce, and the revenues that might be derived from that source: these, he contended, would be adequate to all the wants of the United States, in a season of peace. Overruled, however, at that time, in these, and in other objects of importance, he had the satisfaction of living to see America revert, in almost every instance, to his original ideas;—ideas founded on a sound and penetrating judgment, and matured by deep reflection, and an extensive observation of men and things.—To the judicious patriots through-

out America, the necessity of giving greater powers to the federal head became every day more apparent; as well as the impracticability of continuing the war much longer, if the resources of the country were entirely controlled by thirteen independent sovereignties. But the efforts of enlightened individuals were too weak to correct that fatal disposition of power, which had been made in the first instance, and the impolicy of which was now in vain manifested by experience. Dr. Witherspoon, a leader of the party opposed to the predominant state-influence, might well have exclaimed in the words of Washington, "I see one head gradually changing into thirteen. I see one army branching into thirteen; and, instead of looking up to congress as the supreme controlling power of the United States, considering themselves as dependant on their respective states. In a word, I see the power of congress declining too fast for the consequence and respect which are due to them as the great representative body of America, and am fearful of the consequences."*

On the voluntary retirement of Dr. Witherspoon from congress, at the close of the year 1779, he determined to give particular attention to the revival of the institution over which he presided.

* Marshall's Life Washington, vol. 4, chap. v. viii.

The immediate care of re-commencing the course of instruction, was committed to the charge of his son-in-law, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Smith, a man of distinguished genius and learning, of which his essay on "The Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure of the Human Species," affords ample testimony. In the month of December, 1779, he resigned his house on the college grounds to Vice President Smith, and retired to his country-seat, situated about one mile from, and in full sight of, Princeton: but his name continued to add celebrity to the institution, and it rapidly regained its former reputation. Retirement was a happiness towards which he had long looked with pleasing anticipations. In announcing his removal to Tusculum, his country-house, he makes the following remarks in a letter to a friend: "This I have had in view for some years, and intend to spend the remainder of my life, if possible, *in otio cum dignitate.* You know I was always fond of being a scientific farmer. That disposition has not lost, but gathered strength, since my being in America. In this respect, I received a dreadful stroke indeed, from the English, when they were here; they having seized and mostly destroyed my whole stock, and committed such ravages that we are not yet fully recovered from it."

But he was not long permitted to enjoy the peaceful happiness of his classical retreat. The voice of his countrymen again summoned him to the national council, in the year 1781, and when he finally retired, at the close of 1782, it was to resume only for a short season the tranquil pleasures of Tusculum. In the year 1783, he was induced, contrary to his own judgment, to cross the ocean to endeavour to promote the benefit of the college. The idea of obtaining funds in its behalf, in Great Britain, when the angry sensations, excited by a long war, and the recent dismemberment of the empire, had not yet subsided, was more than visionary. Over-ruled, however, by the persuasion of his friends, and influenced by his warm attachment to the institution, he embarked in December, 1783; and in the sixtieth year of his age, braved the dangers and privations of the sea, to advance the progress of learning in America. The result of his mission accorded with his expectations. Little more than the amount of his necessary expenses was obtained; but notwithstanding this want of success, his enterprize and zeal are not less deserving of commendation. He returned to this country previous to the commencement at Nassau Hall, in September, 1784, having been absent about nine months. Finding nothing to obstruct his enter-

ing into that retirement, which was now become more dear to him, he withdrew, in a great measure, except on important occasions, from the exercise of those public functions that were not immediately connected with the duties of his office, as president of the college, or with his character, as a minister of the gospel.

Notwithstanding his high talents and political character, many believed that the principal merit of Dr. Witherspoon appeared in the pulpit. He was, in many respects, one of the best models by which a young clergyman could form himself for usefulness and celebrity. It was a singular benefit to the whole college, but especially to those who had the profession of the ministry in view, to have such an example constantly before them. Religion, from the manner in which he treated it, always commanded the respect of those who heard him, even when it was not able to engage their hearts.—An admirable textuary, and a profound theologian, he was perspicuous and simple in his manner;—an universal scholar, he was deeply versed in human nature;—a grave, dignified and solemn speaker, he was irresistible in his manner;—and he brought all the advantages derived from these sources, to the illustration and enforcement of divine truth. Though not a fervent and

animated orator, he was always a solemn, affecting, and instructive preacher. A peculiar affection of the nerves,* attended with dizziness, which always overcame him when he gave free vent to his feelings on any subject, obliged him, from his earliest entrance on public life, to impose a strict restraint and guard, upon his sensibility; he once, indeed, fell from the pulpit, in a moment of irresistible religious excitation. He was, therefore, under the necessity of substituting gravity and seriousness of manner, in public speaking, in the room of that fire and warmth, which he was, by nature, well qualified to display, as well as feel, and which he so much admired in others, when managed with prudence. He never read his sermons, nor used even short notes in the pulpit. His practice was to write his sermons at full length, and commit them to memory; but, not restricting himself to the precise words, he often varied from his written discourses,

*In a letter to a friend, dated in March, 1780, Dr. W. thus adverts to this affliction: "I have been, since I wrote you last, in general in good health, and indeed I am, at present, in better health than I have been since I had the last fit. Excepting these fits, and the weakness that followed upon them, my health has been good ever since I came to America; and that weakness is chiefly a swimming in my head, and fear and uncertainty when I want to make a long discourse in public. It was the opinion of Dr. Rush, that these fits were something of the apoplectic kind."

in their delivery, by alterations, additions, and abridgments, which he never suffered to infringe on the strictest accuracy. It was impossible to hear him without attention, or to attend to him without improvement. He possessed a happy talent of unfolding the strict and proper meaning of the sacred writer, in any text from which he chose to discourse; of concentrating and giving perfect unity, to every subject which he treated; and of presenting to the hearer, the most clear and comprehensive views of it. His sermons were distinguished for their judicious, and perspicuous divisions;—for mingling profound remarks on human life with the illustration of divine truth;—and for the lucid order that reigned through the whole. In his discourses, he loved, chiefly, to dwell on the great doctrines of divine grace, and on the distinguishing truths of the gospel. These he brought, as far as possible, to the level of every understanding, and the feeling of every heart. He seldom led his hearers into speculative discussions, and never entertained them by a mere display of talents: all ostentation in the pulpit, he viewed with aversion and contempt. During the whole period of his presidency, he was extremely solicitous to train those studious youths who had the ministry of the gospel in view, in such a manner as to secure the greatest respectability, as

well as usefulness, in that holy profession. It was his constant advice to young preachers, never to enter the pulpit without the most careful preparation; and it was his ambition, and his hope, to render the sacred ministry, the most learned, as well as the most pious and exemplary body of men in the republic.

His known punctuality and exactness were most sacredly observed in the devotional exercises of the Christian life: besides the daily devotions of the closet, and the family, it was his established practice to observe the last day of every year, with his family, as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer; and he was also accustomed to set apart days for secret fasting and prayer, as occasion suggested. He maintained that family religion, and the careful discharge of relative duties, were an excellent incentive to the growth of religion in a man's own soul. "How," said he, "can any person bend his knees in prayer every day with his family, without its being a powerful restraint upon him from the indulgence of any sin which is visible to them? Will such a one, think you, dare to indulge himself in anger, or choose to be seen by them, when he comes home staggering with drunkenness, unfit to perform any duty, or ready to sin still more by the manner of performance? But besides being a re-

straint from gross crimes, I cannot help saying, that, speaking of the things of God, with the concern of a parent, or the humanity of a master, must give a solemnity of spirit, and a sense of their moment, even greater than before. A man cannot speak to the purpose, without feeling what he says; and the new impression will certainly leave behind it a lasting effect. Let me, therefore, earnestly recommend the faithful discharge and careful management of family duties, as you regard the glory of God, the interest of his church, the advantage of your posterity, and your own final acceptance in the day of judgment."

Doctor Witherspoon was a prominent member of the councils and courts of the church, and took an active part in the ecclesiastical politics of his native country. The church of Scotland was divided into two parties, with respect to their ideas of ecclesiastical discipline. The one was willing to confirm, and even extend the right of *patronage*; while the other wished either to abridge these rights, or to confine their operations so as to extend the influence, and secure the consent, of the people in the settlement of ministers. The latter were zealous for the doctrines of grace, and the articles of religion, in all their strictness, as contained in their national Confession of Faith. The

former were willing to allow a greater latitude of opinion; and preached in a style that seemed, to the people, to be less evangelical, and less affecting to the heart and conscience, than that of their opponents. In their concern to exempt the clergy of their party from the unreasonable effects of popular caprice, they too frequently protected them against the just complaints of the people. These were styled *moderate men*, while their antagonists were distinguished by the name of the *orthodox*. Doctor Witherspoon, in his church politics, early and warmly embraced the cause of the latter, and ably supported what his opponents denominated the wildness of orthodoxy, the madness of fanaticism, and the frenzy of the people. This he did from conviction, and, by degrees, acquired such an influence in their councils, that he was considered at length as the head and leader of the party. Before he had acquired this influence, their councils were managed without union and address, while the measures of the moderate party had, for a long time, been conducted by some of the greatest literary characters in the nation. The celebrated Dr. Robertson, at that time the leader of the moderate party, skilfully took advantage of this disunion to divide the forces of his adversary, by placing the matter in such a light, that the most orthodox

would decline voting for it at all. It happened among Dr. Witherspoon's party, as it often does among scrupulous and conscientious men who are not versed in the affairs of the world, that each pursued inflexibly his own opinion, as the dictate of an honest conscience. Hence resulted disunion of measures, and consequent defeat. But Dr. Witherspoon's enlarged mind did not refuse to combine the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove; and to him, belongs the principal merit of creating among them, union, and harmony of design, and of concentrating their views, and giving system to their operations.* At the time of the coronation of George III, the church of Scotland sent a deputation to congratulate his majesty, and profess their allegiance. It became a question of great interest between the contending parties, which should appoint these delegates. Dr. Witherspoon having matured his plan, and assembled his friends, he submitted it to their inspection, with the assurance that if they faithfully followed his instructions, they would prevail, but if they were divided as usual, they would be defeated. His principal dependence was on the insertion of two individuals belonging to the opposite party, in the ticket which he had formed; but the customary

* Roger's Funeral Discourse.

contracted scruples had nearly rendered his measures abortive. One member observed, that "his light would not suffer him to vote for any of them:"—"Your light is all darkness," said Dr. Witherspoon; and he continued to drill them so adroitly, that he carried the election with ease. The two great leaders of the respective parties were not personal enemies to each other; yet in debate they were often severe in their remarks. In departing from the election-room, Dr. Robertson affected to congratulate his opponent on the result, observing, at the same time, that although he was in the minority, he almost always had the address to come off successful;" "I admit," replied Dr. Witherspoon, "your claims to superior skill and management, but you will recollect the authority which tells us, that 'the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.'" On another occasion, having carried some important questions in the general assembly, notwithstanding the efforts of Doctor Robertson, the latter said to him, in a pleasant and easy manner, "I think you have your troops better disciplined than formerly."—"Yes," replied the Doctor, "by urging your politics too far, you have compelled us to beat you with your own weapons."

In the church judicatories of America, he was

always upright in his views, firm in his principles, and ready to seize, at once, the right point of view, on every question. Disentangling, with facility, the most embarrassed subjects, he was clear and conclusive in his reasoning, and, from a peculiar soundness of judgment, and a habit of business, skilful in conducting every discussion to the most speedy and decisive termination. In fine, the church assuredly lost in him one of its greatest lights; and, if the term may be used in ecclesiastical affairs, one of its greatest politicians.

As a writer, his style is simple and comprehensive; his remarks judicious, and often refined; his information accurate and extensive; his matter always weighty and important; his method condensed, yet lucid, and well arranged. Simplicity, perspicuity, precision, comprehension of thought, and knowledge of the world, and of the human heart, prevail throughout the whole of his extensive writings. He is said to have remarked, in relation to them, that "if they were remarkable for any thing, it must be for his attention to general principles, and not to ramifying his subject." His works have not only extended his reputation through Great Britain and America, but he is deservedly held in high repute among almost all the protestant countries of Europe.

His "Serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage," enters deeply into the human heart. The representation of the new tragedy of Douglas, written by a clergyman of the church to which he belonged, on the Edinburg theatre, originated this excellent treatise, in which are found numerous refined observations, after the manner of Messieurs de Port-Royal,* not obvious to ordinary minds, but perfectly founded on the history of man, and the state of society. Written in a plain and perspicuous style, it is replete with sensible argument, happily arranged, and managed with almost irresistible force. In this Inquiry, he anticipates and precludes every objection, and gives ample proof of the doctrine which he proposes to maintain. The pernicious influence of the stage on the public taste and morals, was never more clearly elucidated. He maintains the opinion of a prior writer, that to send young people to the theatre to form their manners, is to expect "that they will learn virtue from profligates, and modesty from harlots." "It ought to be considered," he urges, "particularly with regard to the younger of both sexes, that, in the theatre, their minds must insen-

* A society of Jansenists, in Paris, who made a most violent attack on the Jesuists, in the seventeenth century. One of the members, said to be the Prince of Conti, wrote an excellent essay against plays and play-acting.

sibly acquire an inclination to romance and extravagance, and be unfitted for the sober and serious affairs of common life. Common, or little things, give no entertainment upon the stage, except when they are ridiculed. There must always be something grand, surprising, and striking. In comedies, when all obstacles are removed, and the marriage is agreed on, the play is done. This gives the mind such a turn, that it is apt to despise ordinary business as mean, or deride it as ridiculous. Ask a merchant whether he chooses that his apprentices should go to learn exactness and frugality from the stage; or, whether he expects the most punctual payments from those whose generosity is strengthened there, by weeping over virtue in distress. Suppose a matron coming home from the theatre filled with the ideas that are there impressed upon the imagination;--how low and contemptible do all the affairs of her family appear, and how much must she be disposed, (besides the time already consumed,) to forget or misguide them?" It is impracticable, in this place, to afford a clear view of this powerful performance; but his remarks respecting the terms and allusions which pain the ear of modesty, pronounced and exhibited in a way to give additional force to the evil, and cooly and systematically listened to by virtuous females, cannot

be omitted: "And where can plays be found, at least comedies, that are free from impurity, either directly, or by allusion and double meaning? It is amazing to think, that women who pretend to decency and reputation, whose brightest ornament ought to be modesty, should continue to abet, by their presence, so much unchastity as is to be found in the theatre. How few plays are acted, which a modest woman can see, consistently with decency, in every part? The power of custom and fashion is very great, in making people blind to the most manifest qualities and tendencies of things. There are ladies who frequently attend the stage, who, if they were but once entertained with the same images in a private family, with which they are often presented there, would rise with indignation, and reckon their reputation ruined if ever they should return. I pretend to no knowledge of these things except from printed accounts, and the public bills of what plays are to be acted, and yet may safely affirm, that no woman of reputation, (as it is called in the world,) much less of piety, who has been ten times in a play-house, durst repeat in company all that she has heard there. With what consistency they gravely return to the same schools of lewdness, they themselves best know."—Many of those who conscientiously believe, that the stage is "a

warm incentive to virtue, and powerful preservative against vice," would, if sufficient care were taken to comprehend all the reasoning employed, find their opinions materially shaken by the irresistible force of the arguments to prove, that contributing to support a public theatre is inconsistent with the character of a Christian.

His sermon entitled "The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men," preached at Princeton on the seventeenth of May, 1776;—his treatises on "Justification by free grace, through Jesus Christ," and on "The nature and necessity of Regeneration;"—and his remarks on "The importance of truth in Religion," or "The connexion that subsists between sound principles and a holy practice;"—are not surpassed by any theological writings in the English language.—His farewell Sermon, delivered at Paisley in May, 1776, and his Lectures on Divinity, bear the same impress of a gigantic mind.—The "Essay on the nature, value, and uses, of money," already adverted to, is, without dispute, the best that ever appeared in this country, and was eminently successful in the development of that intricate subject.* The Druid, a series of periodical essays, published by him in

* He said that in composing this essay, he did little more than put together some written speeches which he had delivered in congress.

the year 1781, is particularly useful and interesting: the principal themes of this miscellany are literature and morals, arts and industry;—the philosophy of human nature and of human life. In the prefatory remarks, he admirably ridicules the delightful themes of love and gallantry, which his younger readers might wish him to expatiate upon: "but," he says, "I do not take myself to be qualified to paint the ardours of a glowing flame. I have not seen any killing eyes these several years. It was but yesterday that I smiled involuntarily, on reading a poem in your last magazine, setting forth that both Beauty and Wisdom had taken up their residence with a certain nymph, the one in her cheek, the other in her tongue, and that they were resolved never to depart; which I thought was a little unfortunate for all the rest of the sex. I wish every Strephon and Daphne heartily well, and that the exalted and rapturous praises of Arcadia may be soon brought down to the composed discourse of a quiet man and wife in Philadelphia." The fifth, sixth, and seventh numbers of these entertaining papers, are devoted to observations on the then state of the English language in America, and a classification of the principal prevalent improprieties.

His "Lectures on Moral Philosophy," notwithstanding they assume the form of regular discourses, were, in fact, considered by him as little more than a syllabus or compendium, on which he might enlarge before a class at the time of recitation: thus, he once compelled a printer who, without his knowledge, had undertaken to publish them, to desist from the design. Not a few, however, whose eminence in literature and distinction in society, entitle their opinions to great consideration, have maintained that these lectures, with all their imperfections, contain one of the best and most perspicuous exhibitions of the radical principles of the science on which they treat, that has ever been made.—The surprising resemblance which exists between his "Lectures on Eloquence," and those of Dr. Blair, both pursuing the same track, is a striking example of the effect of early instruction on the habits of thought in later life. These eminent men were class-mates under the same teacher, but no communications on the subject had ever been exchanged; yet the radical ideas, but not the style, are remarkably the same.

Dr. Witherspoon was a frequent contributor to the public papers, particularly on political subjects. His "Thoughts on American Liberty," written at the dawn of the revolution, depict in striking co-

lours the depth of his political foresight, by the recommendation of a series of important measures, almost all of which were subsequently adopted, at various periods. In the essay "On conducting the American controversy," his ideas are not less lucid than sagacious; and his remarks "On the Contest between Great Britain and America" tend to establish the fact, that the people of America, so far from being seditious and factious, entertained a strong attachment to the mother country, and attached high feelings of pride to their descent;—so much so, indeed, that when an American spoke of going to England, he always called it going home. In a communication to the editor of the Scots Magazine, on the "Ignorance of the British with respect to America," he elucidates the subject in a masterly manner, and concludes with the following fact: Some years ago, a frigate came from England with despatches for many or most of the governors of provinces in North America. The captain had orders to go first to New York, and from thence to proceed to Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and the Jerseys. When he arrived at New York, he delivered his despatches there, and mentioned his orders. The governor told him, "if you will give me the letters for the governors of New Jersey and Penn-

sylvania, I will undertake to have them delivered in forty-eight hours; but if you take the route prescribed to you, perhaps they will not receive them in three months." To which the captain replied, "I do not care a farthing about the matter: I will stick to my instructions."

But the talents of Dr. Witherspoon were various: he was not only a serious writer, but he possessed a fund of refined wit and delicate satire. A happy specimen of this is found in the "Ecclesiastical Characteristics, or the Arcana of Church Policy, being an humble attempt to open the Mystery of Moderation." The edge of his wit, in this performance, was directed against certain corruptions in principle and practice prevalent in the church of Scotland; and no attack was ever made upon them which inflicted so deep a wound, or was so severely felt. It lighted up a greater fire than was ever before kindled in the church. The keenness and severity with which he exposed false principles to the scorn and derision of the public, excited the rage and fury of many ministers in Scotland. The most opprobrious epithets were bestowed upon the concealed author, and the most dreadful menaces uttered, in case they should be so fortunate as to discover and convict him. But the revilings of party-spirit vanished like the morning-

mist before the beams of his eloquence, the force of his arguments, and the irresistibility of his deductions, contained in the "Serious Apology for the Ecclesiastical Characteristics," and his "Defence in the Synod of Glasgow." The ironical style which had been so pointedly attacked, he defended upon the basis of Holy Writ, and justified by the examples and recommendations of the grave and venerable Fathers of the Church. But we cannot enter into details: his dexterity in illustrating his position by pungent and amusing anecdotes, may, however, be noticed. In derision of the term *moderate* adopted by the other party, he introduced the following example: A certain minister, being asked the character of a friend of his, who had come up to the assembly, and particularly whether or not he was a *moderate man?* answered "*O! yes; fierce for moderation.*" Having been censured for want of tenderness towards the offenders, supposing the accusations to be true, and accused of injuring the cause of religion by inculcating a bad opinion of the clergy, which led men to infidelity, he indignantly rejected the propriety of covering their failings, and palliating their crimes, upon such shallow and indefensible principles. "I was never better pleased with a story," said he, in exemplification of his argument, "than one I have

read of the late duke of Orleans, regent of France. It happened, that during his regency, one of the French princes of the blood was convicted of committing robbery on the high way. Great intercession was made with the regent to save him from the ignominy of a public execution, which, it was alleged, would be an indelible stain on the royal blood. To this the duke replied, "The royal blood is indeed deeply stained, but it was stained by the commission of the crime; the punishment will only serve to wash out the stain, as far as that is now possible." The style of the "Characteristics" was formed, as he acknowledged himself, upon that of Swift: but, while he rivalled the flowing wit, and caustic satire, he avoided the obscenity and levity, of that celebrated man. Many of the most eminent and respectable clergymen of the Church of England gave evidence in favour of the publication. The bishops of London, after highly commending it, observed, "It appears only directed against a certain party in Scotland; but we have many in England to whom the characters are very applicable." The bishop of Oxford delivered nearly the same sentiments; he said that "He wished their own clergy would read it for their instruction and correction." Dr. Warburton, the celebrated bishop of Gloucester, mentions it with

distinguished approbation, and particularly terms it "a fine piece of raillery against a party to which we are no strangers here."

Doctor Witherspoon was not a man of the most various and extensive learning. His intellectual treasures consisted of a mass of information well selected and thoroughly digested; and scarcely any individual of the age had a more vigorous mind, or sound understanding. He was well versed in the dead languages, being an accurate Latin scholar, and capable of speaking and reading that language, with facility. He was a good proficient in Greek, presiding over the Greek recitations in Longinus, and the higher classics; and he taught Hebrew to all those in the college who wished to study it. He also read and spoke the French language with accuracy and fluency. Although not a mathematician in detail, he had the highest idea of the usefulness and necessity of mathematical knowledge. He banished systems of logic altogether from the college, observing that Euclid's Elements were the best system of logic ever written. He was not versed in the details of Natural Philosophy and the Natural Sciences, of which he had learned only the general principles in the usual course of university education. Although not an indiscriminate and enormous reader, he had

read, and thoroughly digested, the best authors in every department of useful knowledge. It may be mentioned as an evidence of his general reading, that Leonidas, a poem not universally admired, was one among the works which he had perused, and he remarked that he thereby prevented very embarassing feelings when in company with Mr. Glover, the author of that poem, in Europe. His extensive knowledge of books enabled him to form an excellent list for a clergyman's library. His epistolary writings were extremely limited, and few of his letters only are extant.

The eloquence of Dr. Witherspoon was simple and grave, but at the same time, as animated as his constitutional malady would permit. It was a kind of Demosthenian eloquence, which made the blood "shiver along the arteries:" he could not speak in a loud tone of voice, but his articulation was such, that it was distinctly audible in the largest church. His discourses commanded universal attention, and his manner was altogether irresistible: he never indulged in florid flights of fancy, but modelled his oratory according to the plain and comprehensive style of Swift. He was fond of useful horticulture, and valued himself upon the arrangement of his kitchen garden: a lady, once walking with him through it, observed that he had an

excellent garden, but no flowers; "No, madam," said he, "neither in my garden, nor in my discourse."—Another distinguishing feature was his almost intuitive discernment of character: no man could be long in his company without being known. No rogue,—no suppressed facts,—could escape him;—no chicanery could avail; he pierced through every thing as if by intuition.

He possessed another excellent quality, in a remarkable degree;—*his attention to young persons.* He never suffered an opportunity to escape of imparting to them the most useful advice; and he performed this favour in a manner so agreeable, that they could neither be inattentive to it, nor forget it.—He was peculiarly cautious of flattering, and avoided slander so scrupulously, that when injured by any person, it was impossible, by every effort, to persuade him in public to say one word in his disfavour.—Through the whole course of a long life, he uniformly observed order and regularity in the transaction of business, whether secular or spiritual; and he regarded the malice of the world with that pity and unconcern which result from a benevolent mind and an approving conscience. "Few persons," he remarked, "have been less concerned than I have been, through life, to contradict false accusations, from an opinion which I

formed early, and which has been confirmed by experience, that there is scarcely any thing more harmless than political, or party, malice. It is best to leave it to itself: opposition and contradiction are the only means of giving it life or duration."

Possessing remarkable frankness of character, Dr. Witherspoon, in his moments of relaxation from the great and serious affairs of life, was an amusing and instructive companion. His rich fund of anecdote was improved by an abundant share of wit; but he was far from affecting the character of the latter, and used it with the utmost discretion. The following anecdote presents a specimen of his good-humoured wit. When Burgoyne's army was captured at Saratoga, general Gates despatched one of his aids to congress to carry the intelligence. The officer, after being delayed by the amusements which offered themselves on his way, at length arrived at Philadelphia, but the report of the victory had reached there several days before. Congress, according to custom, proceeded to give the messenger some mark of their esteem. It was proposed to present him with an elegant sword; but Dr. Witherspoon rose, and begged leave to move, that instead of a sword, they should present him with *a pair of golden spurs*.—The "Ecclesiastical Characteristics," as we have already

observed, abound in brilliant scintillations of wit; and the hypothetical "Supplication of J. R. * * * * * *," is a master-piece of the most biting satire, and sarcastic frolics of fancy. This Rivingston was a printer in New York, whose paper, commonly called the "Rivingston Lying Gazette," was devoted to the cause of the enemy. Dr. Witherspoon, in his supposed petition to congress, soliciting protection, after the evacuation of the city, from the resentment of the whigs, presents, with irresistible humour, a catalogue of his crimes, all satirically set forth as claims upon the mercy and forgiveness of the nation. Falsehood and misrepresentation had been resorted to by this man, in every possible shape that could be thought of: the British general Robertson once told him in his office, that "he had carried things so far, that people could not believe one word he said, even though it were as true as gospel."

Dr. Witherspoon was an affectionate husband, a tender parent, a kind master, and a cordial friend. He was twice married. He was united to his first wife, named Montgomery, in Scotland, at an early age: she was an excellent woman, without much education, but eminent for her piety and benevolence. His children, at the period of his emigration to America, consisted of three sons and two

daughters.—James, the eldest son, held the rank of major in the revolutionary army, and was killed at the battle of Germantown. John possessed good talents and attainments, and was bred a physician. David applied himself to the study of the law, and settled in North Carolina, where he became a respectable practitioner. In the year 1780, he acted as private secretary to the president of congress.—Ann, the oldest daughter, was married to the Rev. Dr. Samuel S. Smith, who succeeded Dr. Witherspoon as president of the college; and Frances entered into matrimony with Dr. David Ramsay, the celebrated historian.—His second marriage excited much noise and attention, he being, at that time, seventy, and his wife only twenty-three, years of age.—Excepting Washington, he is said to have possessed more of what is called *presence*, than almost any other man: he was six feet in height, finely proportioned, and remarkably dignified in his appearance. It was difficult to trifle in his presence;—a circumstance which proved highly useful in the government of the college, by abashing the impudent and presuming. He had a pretty strong Scottish accent, which, however, continued to decrease till the day of his death.

The memory of this eminent man is not forgotten in the land of his birth;—in the country which

he contributed to create, it can perish only with its liberties, and the overthrow of those principles which are inscribed on the charter of independence. At a public dinner given to the Rev. Dr. Chalmers, in Glasgow, on the eleventh of November, 1823, the following toast was proposed; "Health to Professor Chase, and prosperity to the rising literature of America." Mr. Chase, after suitable acknowledgments, adverted to the many natives of Scotland, eminent for piety and erudition, who had taught in the seminaries of America." "To mention but a single instance," he continued, "the memory of Witherspoon is embalmed in every American heart. The traveller pauses amidst the shades of Princeton College; he stands at the foot of the grave where Witherspoon sleeps by the side of Findley, and Davis, and Edwards, and the other men of kindred spirit, who, in their day, presided and taught in that college; and while he thinks of his distinguished zeal and services, he blesses the land that gave him birth, and the university that trained him for so much usefulness."

Bodily infirmities began, at length, to fall heavily upon him. For more than two years previous to his death, he was afflicted with the loss of sight; which contributed to hasten the progress of his

other disorders. He bore his sufferings with exemplary patience, and even cheerfulness; nor would his active mind, and his unabated desire of usefulness, permit him, even in this situation, to desist from his ministry, and his duties in the college, so far as his health and strength would admit. During his blindness, he was frequently led into the pulpit, both at home and abroad; and always acquitted himself with his usual accuracy, and not unfrequently with more than his usual solemnity and animation.

On the fifteenth of November, 1794, in the seventy-third year of his age, he retired to his eternal rest, full of honours, and full of days,—there to receive the plaudit of his Lord, "well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, be thou ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—His remains were interred at Princeton, and the following epitaph is inscribed upon his tomb:

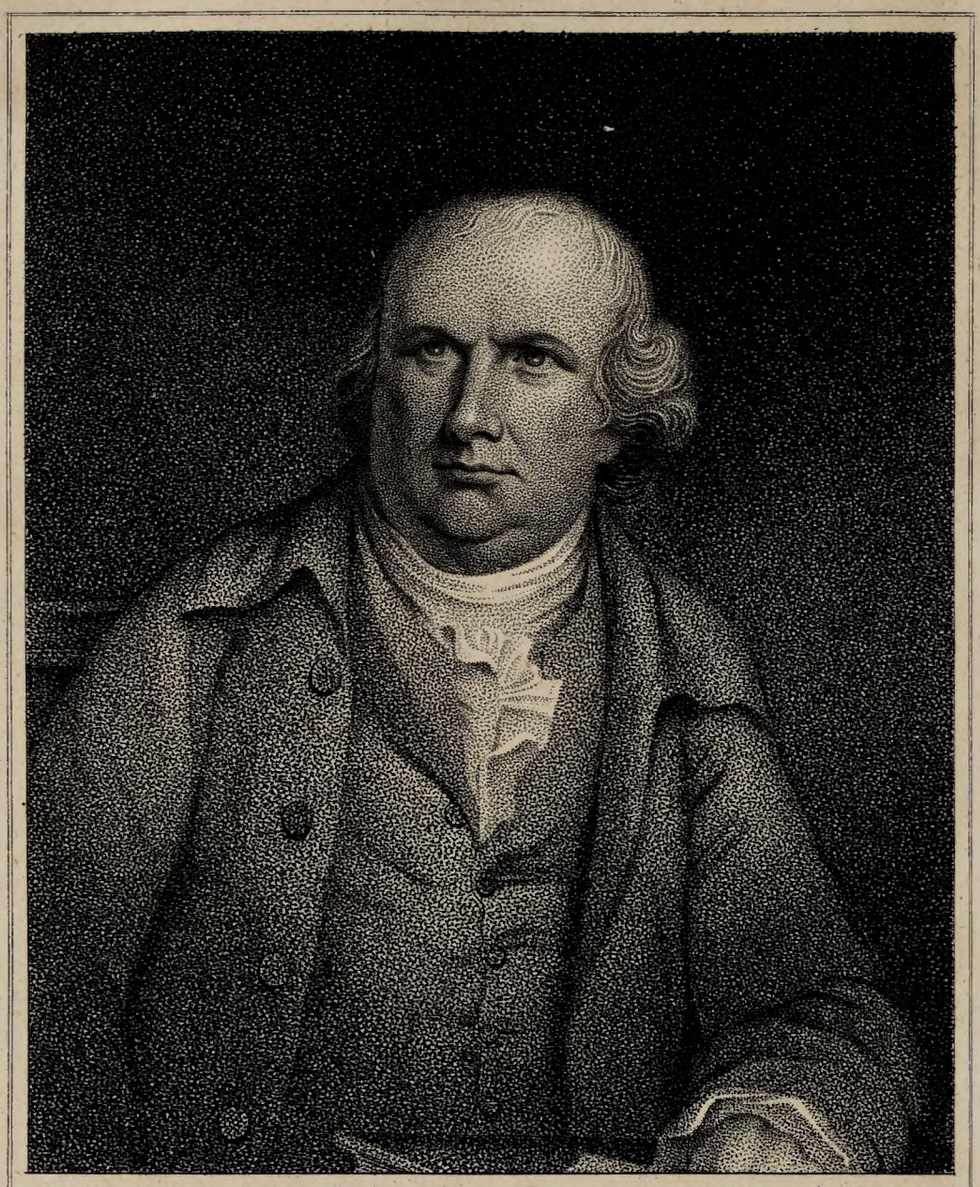
Reliquæ Mortales,
Joannis Witherspoon, D. D. L. L. D.
Collegii Neo-Cæsariensis Præsidis, plurimum venerandi;
Sub hoc marmore
inhumantur.
Natus parochio Yestrensi, Scotorum,

Nonis Februarii, MDCCXXII.—V. S.
Literis humanibus in Universitati Edinburgensi
imbutus;
Sacris ordinibus initiatus, Anno MDCCXLIII;
munere pastorali
perviginti quinque annos fideliter functus est,
primo apud Beith, deinde apud Paisly.
Præses designatus Aulæ Nassovicæ, Anno
MDCCLXVIII;
Idibusque Sextilis
maxima expectatione omnium,
munus præsidiale suscepit.
Vir, eximia pietate, ac virtute;
omnibus dotibus animi præcellens;
doctrinâ atque optimarum artium studiis,
penitus eruditus:
Concionator gravis, solemnis,
Orationes ejus sacræ
præceptis et institutis vitæ,
præstantissimis,
nec non expositionibus sacros Sanctæ Scripturæ
dilucidis,
sunt repletæ.
In sermone familiari, comis, lepidus, blandus;
rerum ecclesiæ forensium
peritissimus;
summâ prudentiâ

et in regendâ et instituendâ juventate,
præditus.
Existimationem Collegii apud peregrinos
auxit;
bonasque literas in eo multum provexit.
Inter lumina clarissima, et doctrinæ, et ecclesiæ,
diu luxit.
Tandem, veneratus, dilectus, lugendus omnibus,
Animam efflavit, XVI, Kal. Decem.
Anno salutis mundi MDCCXCIV;
Ætatis suæ LXXIII.*

* See Note, A.

ROBERT MORRIS.



ROBERT MORRIS.

Engraved by J.B.Longacre from an Original Painting

in the Possession of Mrs. Morris.

ROBERT MORRIS.

Robert Morris was born in Lancashire, in the month of January, 1733-4, O. S. of respectable parentage; his father being a merchant of some eminence in Liverpool, and extensively engaged in trade with the American colonies. Mr. Morris, having formed the design of emigrating, embarked for America, leaving his son under the care of his grand-mother, to whom he was extremely attached. Having established himself at Oxford, on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay, he sent to England for young Morris, who arrived upon the theatre of his future fame at the age of thirteen years.

Mr. Morris did not enjoy the benefits of a classical education. He was placed under the tuition of one Annan, at that time the only teacher in Philadelphia, and his progress in learning does not appear to have been very rapid. This probably

arose more from the incompetency of the master than the deficiency of the scholar; for, in reply to the dissatisfaction expressed by his father at his little improvement, he observed, "I have learned, sir, all that he could teach me."

His father, at this period, carried on an extensive business, as agent for vessels from Liverpool. Having invited a large party to dine on board of one of these ships, he was returning to shore in the yawl, after the conclusion of the festivity, when the captain fired a salute in honour of the occasion. A wad from one of the guns unfortunately struck, and inflicted a severe wound on his arm, which mortified, and caused his death. His memory was so highly esteemed, that the gentlemen residing in the vicinity, solemnly enjoined in their wills, that his tomb should be preserved inviolate. His favourite dog could not be enticed from the body of his deceased master, and died upon the grave; thus affording another feeling example of the affection which warms the most faithful, and least fickle, friend of man.

Mr. Morris was thus left an orphan at the age of fifteen years. He had previously been placed by his father in the compting-room of Mr. Charles Willing, at that time one of the first merchants of Philadelphia, for the purpose of receiving a com-

mercial education. Although deprived of the benefit of parental counsel, his clerkship was characterised by the greatest fidelity and attention, and he soon gained the implicit confidence of Mr. Willing. His anxiety to promote the interests of the establishment was unceasing; and his activity and decision of character, are exemplified by the responsibility he assumed in transactions which admitted of no delay. During the absence of Mr. Willing, a vessel arrived at Philadelphia giving particular information, for his benefit, of the sudden advance in the price of flour at the port from which she came. Mr. Morris immediately contracted for all he could procure, on account of Mr. Willing; who, on his return to the city, was received by the complaints of certain merchants that his clerk had raised the price of flour. Mr. Willing defended the proceedings of his young friend, and silenced the complainants by an appeal to their own probable line of conduct, in case of their having first received the news. In after life, Mr. Morris felt some pride in calling Mr. Charles Willing "his master:" he had been an intimate of his family, and found in him a kind, indulgent, and valuable, protector. During the last illness of Mr. Willing, he requested to see him, and gave, upon that occasion, an unequivocal testimonial of his opinion

respecting the youthful character of Mr. Morris; "Robert," said he, emphatically, "always continue to act as you have done."

His extensive mercantile knowledge, and close application to the discharge of his duties, attracted the friendship and confidence of Mr. Thomas Willing, who proposed to him, some time after the expiration of the term for which he had engaged himself, to form together a commercial connexion. This partnership was entered into in the year 1754, and continued until 1793, embracing the long period of thirty-nine years. Mr. Morris was the acting partner, and previous to the commencement of the revolution, engaged more extensively in commerce than any other merchant in Philadelphia.

But private interest possessed little influence over the mind of Robert Morris, when it clashed with his high notions of public duty. The tyrannical measures adopted by the British ministry in relation to the government of the colonies, gradually assuming a more oppressive form, and urged in a more haughty and daring manner, were viewed by him with a calm and discerning eye, which seemed to penetrate into the darkness of futurity, and unfold the glories and sufferings of the approaching revolution. Among the first to feel and to resent the encroachments of power, he never

wavered for a moment in his political faith; although many of those eminent men who afterwards distinguished themselves in the foremost ranks of patriotism, and breasted the tempest of war with daring and dauntless devotion, were, at that critical period, nerveless and undecided.—Notwithstanding the assertions of British journalists, the British subjects in the colonies were among the most loyal in their dominions. Minds shackled by precedent do not at once regain their freedom. A striking instance of the force of habit, and the general reluctance to oppose the laws of the mother-country, however harsh and arbitrary, occurred a short time previous to the period fixed for the first operation of the Stamp Act. A very numerous meeting of the members of the bar, residing in the city of Philadelphia and its vicinity, was held at Mullin's Beef-Steak House in Water Street, at that time a large and much frequented hotel. Questions of a nature formidable to the meeting, were widely discussed. It was debated, "Whether they should intermit all business? or carry it on *with* stamps? or *without* them, and set the Stamp Act at defiance?" When the question for proceeding without stamps was proposed, a great majority were in favour of postponing the decision; it was, however, finally put, and Mr. John Dickenson strenuously

argued against adopting the measure, upon the ground that the colonies were bound by all acts of parliament. Only three individuals—the venerable judge Peters, Edward Biddle, and James Allen—voted for going on without stamps, and risking the consequences.—Not long after this astonishing exhibition of lukewarmness or timidity, the members of the bar, with very limited exceptions, ranked among the most eminent and determined patriots; and they preserved that character through the whole course of the revolutionary conflict: this change was effected when it appeared that no relaxation could be expected in the determined plan to impose taxes on the colonies without their consent. Mr. Dickenson particularly distinguished himself, as the advocate of doctrines directly the reverse of his opinions delivered at the ton tavern.

Mr. Morris zealously united in all voluntary associations for public purposes, and was generally distinguished as a leader in measures of importance. As no man felt more deeply the national degradation which would ensue from the triumph of the British Parliament, in relation to colonial taxation, he exerted himself with peculiar activity to avert it. His influence and his talents proved essentially beneficial during the popular excitement which preceded the revolution. At that ominous

period, his firmness and equanimity were displayed on all proper occasions, and contributed to settle the public mind into that state of calm and steady determination, which strikes more fear into the soul of the tyrant, than all the wild and irregular paroxysms of passion.—Ever consistent in his principles and conduct, he signed, without hesitation, the non-importation agreement, adopted by the merchants of Philadelphia in the year 1765; preferring the sacrifice of private interest to the continuance of an intercourse, which increased the revenue of the British government, and enlarged the resources of a hostile nation. The house of Willing and Morris was engaged in extensive mercantile transactions with England, and imported large quantities of her manufactures and colonial produce: hence the cessation of those branches of commerce, was, to them, an important sacrifice.

The unalterable resolution of Mr. Morris, with respect to his political course of conduct, appears to have been formed in the early part of the year 1775: the shedding of American blood in Massachusetts, forever fixed the principles upon which his resplendent services in the darkest days of the revolution were founded, and extinguished the last glimmering of hope that the evils and miseries of war might yet be averted. On St. George's day,

(twenty-third April, 1775,) about one hundred guests and members of the St. George's Society were assembled at the City Tavern in Philadelphia, to celebrate the anniversary of their tutelary saint. Mr. Morris was the presiding officer. Reconciliation, and a change of ministers, were the phantoms which had lulled and deluded the American community. About five o'clock in the afternoon, in the height of their festivity, when moderate hilarity alone had attended their libations, the news of the massacre at Lexington, which occurred four days previous, was communicated to the company. No scene ever shifted so instantaneously and appalingly: an electrical shock could not have been more suddenly prostrating. The tables were instantly deserted, and the seats overturned. Mr. Morris, and a few members, among whom was the Hon. Richard Peters, (the sole survivor among all those assembled on that day,) retained their seats, and viewed this extraordinary display in silent astonishment. When the fugitives had retreated, a solemn scene succeeded the merriment and gayety which, a few moments before, had resounded through the hall. After feelingly deploring the awful event which separated them forever from a remorseless parent, the small party that remained took leave of their patron saint, and pronounced a

solemn requiem over the painted vapour,—*reconciliation*. Mr. Morris, in unison with his associates, at that time avowed his irrevocable decision as to revolutionary measures, from which he never deviated.

The appointment of Mr. Morris, by the legislature of Pennsylvania, on the third of November, 1775, as one of the delegates to the second congress, was his first formal entrance into public life. The uniformity and solidity of his opinions relative to the connexions between Great Britain and her continental colonies, united with his powerful and discerning mind, his high rank in society, and the extensive influence which he enjoyed, in rendering him an able and favourite representative of the state, and a valuable coadjutor in the deliberations of the national council. Soon after he had assumed his seat in congress, he was added to the secret committee, (of which he was the chairman,) that had been appointed, on the eighteenth of September, to contract for the importation of arms, ammunition, and gunpowder. On the eleventh of December, he was appointed a member of the committee to devise ways and means for furnishing the colonies with a naval armament; and their report, embracing the expedience of augmenting the navy by the addition of five ships of 32, five of 28, and

three of 24, guns, being adopted, a naval committee was formed, of which Mr. Morris was a member, with full powers to carry it into execution, with all possible expedition. In the beginning of 1776, he was conspicuous in the discussions which attended the regulation of trade, and the restrictions under which it ought to be placed. On the fifteenth of April, 1776, he was specially commissioned to negociate bills of exchange, to be indemnified by congress should any loss arise from his responsibility as the endorser. On the twentieth of July, he was re-elected a representative of the state of Pennsylvania.

When the approach of the enemy through New Jersey caused the removal of congress from Philadelphia to Baltimore, the national affairs wore a gloomy and disheartening aspect. Many firm friends of the cause believed that no exertions of the feeble and suffering army of Washington could impede the progress of Cornwallis towards Philadelphia, and that the unequal conflict was rapidly approaching an unfavourable termination. But the faith of Mr. Morris continued unshaken, and on the very day that congress was compelled to retire to Baltimore, he assumed the responsibility of borrowing ten thousand dollars for the use of the marine-committee, relying on the indemnification promised

by the national legislature, at a period when it was uncertain whether, in a few days, their functions would not be arrested and the body dissolved. To the prevention of this fearful event, to the fresh excitement of hope and confidence in the people, to the much required animation of the spirit of the army, to the protection, at that time, of the city of Philadelphia, and to the arrest of the enemy's advance in the full career of conquest, Robert Morris was the principal contributor; because, without the pecuniary aid furnished by him, the exertions and plans of the commander-in-chief could not have been carried into effect, nor the valour of his troops been brought into action. In December, 1776, when congress retired from Philadelphia, a committee, consisting of Mr. Morris, Mr. Clymer, and Mr. Walton, was appointed, with extensive powers, to remain in that city, and execute all necessary and proper continental business. Being in daily expectation of the arrival of the enemy, Mr. Morris removed his family to the country, and resided with an intimate friend who had resolved, at every hazard, to remain in the city. At this time, he received a letter from general Washington, who was then encamped with his army at the place now called New-Hope, in which it was stated, that while the enemy was accurately informed of all his

movements, he was compelled, from the want of specie, to remain in complete ignorance of their designs, and that a certain sum specified was absolutely necessary to the safety of the army, and to enable him to obtain such intelligence of the movements and precise position of the enemy on the opposite shore, as would authorise him to act offensively. This pressing application, and appeal to the feelings of Mr. Morris, which, from the urgency of the occasion, was despatched by a confidential messenger, was received at a time when compliance was almost hopeless, owing to the general flight of the citizens. He frequently adverted to the mental depression which he experienced on that trying occasion, and to the means he employed to relieve the necessities of the commander-in-chief. From the time he received the despatch until evening, he revolved deeply and gloomily in his mind, the means through which he might realise the expectations which had been formed from his patriotism and influence: his usual hour of retiring from the compting room arrived, and as he was proceeding slowly and sorrowfully home, he accidentally met a gentleman of the society of Friends, with whom he was intimate, and who placed implicit confidence in his integrity. He inquired the news from Mr. Morris, who replied, "The most

important news is, that I require a certain sum in specie, and that you must let me have it." His friend hesitated and mused for a moment; "your security is to be my note and my honour;" continued Mr. Morris.—"Robert, thou shalt have it," replied the friend; and this personal loan, causing a prompt and timely compliance with the demand, enabled general Washington to gain the signal victory over the hireling Hessians at Trenton, which not only diminished the numerical force of the enemy, but had the necessary and important results of animating the spirit of patriotism and checking the hopes and predictions of our enemies. It also destroyed the impression which the reputed prowess of the conquered foe, and the experience of their ferocity over the unprotected and defenceless, had made among the people.—Such was the instrumentality of Robert Morris, in the victory of Trenton; and it may be truly remarked, that although his own brows were unadorned with the laurels of the warrior, it was his hand which crowned the heroes who triumphed on that day.

On the tenth of March, 1777, he was, a third time, appointed, by the assembly of Pennsylvania, to represent that state in congress, in conjunction with Benjamin Franklin, George Clymer, James Wilson, Daniel Roberdeau, and Jonathan B. Smith.

During this year, the "secret committee" was dissolved, and succeeded in all its powers by the committee of commerce," of which Mr. Morris was a prominent member. On the twenty-eighth of November, he was selected, together with Mr. Gerry and Mr. Jones, to repair to the army, and in a private confidential consultation with the commander-in-chief, to consider the best and most practicable means for conducting a winter campaign with vigour and success; and, with the concurrence of General Washington, to direct every measure which circumstances might require for the promotion of the public service. He was frequently and actively engaged in managing the fiscal concerns of congress, a duty for which his capacity for business, and intimate knowledge of pecuniary transactions, rendered him peculiarly competent. On the twenty-seventh of August, 1778, he was appointed a member of the standing committee of finance. Besides the enthusiastic zeal which he manifested in the cause of his country, and the financial talents which he possessed, his commercial credit probably ranked higher than that of any other man in the community; and this credit he unhesitatingly devoted to the public service, whenever necessity required such an evidence of his patrotism and disinterestedness. These occasions

were neither few in their number, nor trifling in their nature. The Honourable Richard Peters, one of the few surviving prominent men of the revolution, who filled an important and most confidential station in the department of war, bears testimony that Mr. Morris frequently obtained pecuniary, as well as other, supplies, which were most pressingly required for the service, on his own responsibility, and apparently on his own account, when, from the known state of the public treasury, they could not have been procured by the government. His agency in the battle of Trenton has been already stated. Judge Peters, being placed at the head of the board of war, possessed the most perfect knowledge of every military transaction, and of the influence of Mr. Morris in giving efficacy to enterprise. The personal friendship which subsisted between those active and enlightened patriots, and their constant co-operation in the great work of freedom, closely united them together, and it is by the pen of the surviving statesman, that the particulars of the providential supply of lead for the army is afforded. "In 1779 or 1780, two of the most distressing years of the war, General Washington wrote to me a most alarming account of the prostrate condition of the military stores, and enjoined my immediate exertions to supply the deficiencies.

There were no musket cartridges but those in the men's boxes, and they were wet; of course, if attacked, a retreat, or a rout, was inevitable. We, (the board of war,) had exhausted all the lead accessible to us, having caused even the spouts of houses to be melted, and had offered, abortively, the equivalent in paper of two shillings specie per pound for lead. I went, in the evening of the day on which I received this letter, to a splendid entertainment given by Don Mirailles, the Spanish minister. My heart was sad, but I had the faculty of brightening my countenance, even under gloomy disasters; yet it seems *then* not sufficiently adroitly. Mr. Morris, who was one of the guests, and knew me well, discovered some casual traits of depression. He accosted me in his usual blunt and disengaged manner: "I see some clouds passing across the sunny countenance you assume;—what is the matter?" After some hesitation, I showed him the general's letter, which I had brought from the office, with the intention of placing it at home in a private cabinet. He played with my anxiety, which he did not relieve for some time. At length, however, with great and sincere delight, he called me aside, and told me that the Holkar privateer had just arrived at his wharf, with *ninety tons of lead*, which she had brought as ballast. It had been

landed at Martinique, and stone ballast had supplied its place; but this had been put on shore, and the lead again taken in. 'You shall have my half of this fortunate supply; *there* are the owners of the other half;'—(indicating gentlemen in the apartment.) 'Yes; but I am already under heavy personal engagements, as guarantee for the department, to those, and other gentlemen.' 'Well,' rejoined Mr. Morris, 'they will take your assumption with my guarantee.'—I, instantly, on these terms, secured the lead, left the entertainment, sent for the proper officers, and set more than one hundred people to work, during the night. Before morning a supply of cartridges was ready, and sent off to the army. I could relate many more such occurrences. Thus did our affairs succeed, "per varios casus, por tot discrimina rerum;" and these *discrimina rerum* occurred so often, that we had frequently occasion feelingly to exclaim,

> 'Quod optanti divum promittere nemo
> Auserat—Fors en! attulit ultro.'"

"Events, happy or adverse, succeeded each other so rapidly, that the present almost obliterated the past;—at least, the actual employment growing out of the present, often critical, arduous, and hazardous, blunted our recollection. We lived, in many

periods of our struggle, by the day; and deemed ourselves happy, if the sun set upon us without misfortune."

Few public men have escaped the breath of slander. During the time that congress assembled at Yorktown, reflections were indulged in by a member of that body, which tended to raise a suspicion of fraudulent proceedings to the detriment of the public, by the house of Willing, Morris, & Co. The established character of Mr. Laurens impresses the belief that his sole object in making these remarks was to do justice; which opinion is corroborated by his co-operation, however late, in the vindication of Mr. Morris. On the nineteenth of January, 1779, a committee of five was appointed to inquire into the facts set forth in the accusatory papers which had been submitted to congress. Three days after, Mr. Morris, having been notified of their appointment, delivered his defence in writing to the committee. Never was vindication more triumphant and conclusive. On the twenty-eighth of the same month, he addressed a letter to congress, requesting, as insinuations had been publicly thrown out against him on the floor of congress, relative to the books of the secret committee, that a special committee should be appointed to examine the entries and settlements

made by him in those books, as well as the expenditure of public money entrusted to him, and to the late house of Willing, Morris, & Co.; he further requested that the committee should examine the state of their present unsettled dependencies with the United States, and be directed to report to the house specially on the premises, in order that his conduct might be duly understood in congress, and from thence made known to the public by the best authority.—On the ninth of February, the committee brought in their report. Previous to its being taken into consideration, on the eleventh, the memory of Mr. Laurens was invigorated by the words "new ship" contained in the written vindication of Mr. Morris: he accordingly produced a paper, containing an extract of a letter from the secret committee to Thomas Morris, commercial agent at Nantz, stating that a *new ship* had been chartered in Baltimore; and concluded by stating, that it afforded him the greatest satisfaction to have it in his power to produce an evidence, which, in his opinion, put it beyond all doubt that the cargo of the ship Farmer, which formed the basis of the accusation, was shipped on public account.—It appears that Willing, Morris, & Co. had been hastily suspected of mingling their private transactions with the public business committed to their charge.

From the minutes of the secret committee of the fifteenth of August, and twentieth and twenty-sixth of September, it is proved, that that committee, from a full confidence in the integrity of Robert Morris, from a knowledge of his commercial abilities, and from a conviction that his extensive mercantile connexions, both at home and abroad, would enable him to execute with facility the continental commercial affairs, requested and authorised him to purchase produce in the different states on public account, and to export the same, entrusting him solely and exclusively with the transaction of the business. At the same time, it was understood by the secret committee that his purchases and exports were to be made under cover of the firm of Willing, Morris, & Co.; and this mode was adopted to prevent the increase in the price of produce and hire of vessels, which generally took place when it was known that purchases and contracts were making on public account. These premises having been fully substantiated, it was then proved that although the ship Farmer was chartered by Willing, Morris, & Co., it was effected on continental account, and that her cargo of iron and tobacco was purchased and shipped on the same account; thus giving the whole transaction the colour of a private commercial concern, correspondent to

the plan adopted by the secret committee. Moreover, satisfactory evidence was produced that Willing, Morris, & Co. did not load any chartered ship on their account and risk, during the time that Mr. Morris acted as the agent of the committee. Congress, therefore, unanimously agreed with the report, that the defence of Mr. Morris was full and explicit on every fact, circumstance, and question, stated in the charges against him, and supported by clear and satisfactory vouchers;—that he had clearly and fully vindicated himself;—and that, in the execution of the powers committed to him by the secret committee, he had acted with fidelity and integrity, and an honourable zeal for the welfare of his country.—Similar aspersions were heaped upon him during the course of his financial career, which, when he deigned to notice them at all, were dissipated with equal facility and success. But when his tongue was silent in the grave, posthumous calumniators dared to outrage the memory, and tread upon the tomb, of that great and illustrious man:—would that his voice could issue from the sepulchre, to stamp shame and confusion upon the ingratitude of man. The effects of envious and malicious contemporaries were as fleeting as they were frail;—calumny was shaftless when directed against the bosom friend of Washington. But the ingratitude

of Saul unto David, had not changed its nature in the lapse of more than twenty-eight centuries: "And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war; and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants. And it came to pass, as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth; and the saying displeased him; and he said, they have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward."— Robert Morris is now free from the persecutions of man; and it becomes the duty of his biographer, warmed by the recollection of his services and virtues, to repel the indignities offered to his ashes, and crush, with stubborn facts, that ignoble spirit which would exalt a favourite individual on the wreck of another's character, and indulge sectional

prejudices and party animosity, by labouring to libel a name, which shall live when its calumniators are forgotten, or only remembered as models of ingratitude and malignity.

In the year 1780, when the reverses in the south had produced general depression, and the increasing and clamorous wants of the army threatened its total dissolution, Mr. Morris, with a zeal guided by that sound discretion which turns expenditure to the best account, established a bank, in conjunction with many patriotic citizens of Philadelphia, the principal object of which was to supply the army with provisions and rum. His partner, Mr. Thomas Willing, was appointed president through his agency, and Tench Francis, cashier. The plan was digested by Mr. Morris, who, to establish confidence in the institution, proposed a subscription among the citizens in the form of bonds, obliging them to pay, if it should become necessary, the amounts affixed to their names, in gold and silver, for the purpose of fulfilling the engagements of the bank. He headed the list with a subscription of 10,000*l.*; and was followed by others, to the amount of 315,000*l.*, Pennsylvania money: in the lapse of less than half a century, ninety-one of the ninety-six subscribers who gave their bonds on this patri-

otic occasion, have been numbered with the dead.* The directors were authorised to borrow money on the credit of the bank, and to grant special notes bearing interest at six per cent. The credit of the members was to be employed, and their money advanced, if necessary, but no emoluments whatever were to be derived from the institution. Congress, while they expressed a high sense of this patriotic transaction, pledged the faith of the United States effectually to reimburse and indemnify the associators. Thus, at a time when the public credit was at its lowest ebb, and the public exigencies most pressing, an institution was erected on the credit and exertions of a few patriotic individuals, for the purpose of supplying, and transporting, to the army, three millions of rations, and three hundred hogsheads of rum: it continued until the ensuing year, when the Bank of North America was established.

The last re-election of Mr. Morris to congress, previous to the adoption of the Federal Constitution, occurred on the thirteenth of December, 1777.—The exertion of his talents in the public councils, the use of his credit in procuring supplies at home and abroad, and his personal labour

*The survivors are Richard Peters, Thomas Leiper, William Hall, John Donaldson, and John Mease.

as special agent, or congressional committee-man, were not the only means adopted by him to support the cause in which he had embarked. The free and public expression of his sentiments, both in the daily and nightly meetings of the zealous, and in the interchange of friendly intercourse with his fellow-citizens, together with the confident tone of ultimate success which he supported, served to arouse the desponding, to fix the wavering, and confirm the brave.—The extensive commercial and private correspondence which he maintained with England, furnished him with early intelligence of all the measures resolved on by the British government, as well as the debates in parliament, and a large fund of private information of importance to this country. He habitually communicated these letters to a few select mercantile friends, who regularly assembled in the insurance-room of the Merchant's Coffee-House, and through them, the intelligence which they contained was diffused among the citizens;—thus keeping alive the spirit of opposition, instructing them in the gradual progress of hostile movements, and enforcing the conviction that little was to be expected from the government, with respect to an alleviation of the oppressions and hardships against which the colonies had, for a long time, most humbly, earnestly,

and eloquently remonstrated. This practice, which began previous to the suspension of the intercourse between the two countries, he continued during the war; and, through the medium of friends on the continent, especially in France and Holland, he received, for a time, the despatches which had previously come direct from England.*

On the twentieth of February, 1781, Robert Morris was unanimously elected superintendant of finance. To offer a succinct view of the herculean task which this appointment imposed, it is necessary to state, that he was required to examine into the state of the public debts, the public expenditures, and the public revenue; to digest and report plans for improving and regulating the finances, and for establishing order and economy in the expenditure of the public money; to direct the execution of all plans adopted by congress respecting revenue and expenditure; to superintend and control the settlement of all public accounts; to direct and control all persons employed in procuring supplies for the public service, and in the expenditure of public money; to obtain accounts of all the issues of the specific supplies furnished by the several states; to compel the payment of all monies due to the United States, and, in his official character, to prosecute

* Edinburg Encyclopædia, Phil. Edit. *sub art.*

in behalf of those states, for all delinquencies respecting the public revenue and expenditure; and to report to congress the officers necessary for conducting the various branches of his department. By successive resolutions of congress, he was subsequently empowered to appoint and remove, at his pleasure, his assistants in his peculiar office; as well as those persons, not immediately appointed by congress, as were officially entrusted with the expenditure of the public supplies; to appoint agents to prosecute or defend for him in his official capacity; to manage and dispose of the monies granted by his most christian majesty to the United States, and the specific supplies required from the several states; to procure on contract all necessary supplies for the army, navy, artificers and prisoners of war; to make provision for the support of the civil-list; to correspond with the foreign ministers of the United States upon subjects relating to his department; and to take under his care and management, all loans and other monies obtained in Europe, or elsewhere, for the use of the United States. But it is impossible to enumerate the vast variety of measures in which he co-operated for the public benefit. To trace him through all the acts of his financial administration, would involve the history of the last two years of the revolutiona-

ry war. When the exhausted credit of the government threatened the most alarming consequences; when the army was utterly destitute of the necessary supplies of food and clothing; when the military chest had been drained of its last dollar, and even the confidence of Washington was shaken;—Robert Morris, upon his own credit, and from his private resources, furnished those pecuniary means, without which all the physical force of the country would have been in vain.

In the month of March, the following letter, conveying his sentiments in relation to the high trust reposed in him, was submitted to congress.

Philadelphia, 13th *March*, 1781.

His Excellency, the President of Congress;

SIR,

I had the honour to receive your excellency's letter of the twenty-first of last month, enclosing the act of congress of the twentieth, whereby I am appointed, by an unanimous election of that honourable body, to the important office of "Superintendant of Finance." Perfectly sensible of the honour done me by this strong mark of confidence from the sovereign authority of the United States, I feel myself bound to make the acknowledments due, by pursuing a conduct formed to answer the ex-

pectations of congress, and promote the public welfare. Were my abilities equal to my desire of serving America, I should have given an immediate determination after this appointment was made; but, conscious of my own deficiencies, time for consideration was absolutely necessary. Little, however, of the time which has elapsed, have I been able to devote to this object, as the business before the legislature of Pennsylvania (wherein I have the honour of a seat,) has demanded, and continues to demand, my constant attendance.

So far as the station of superintendant of finance, or indeed any other public station or office, applies to myself, I should, without the least hesitation, have declined an acceptance; for, after upwards of twenty years assiduous application to business as a merchant, I find myself at that period when my mind, body, and inclination, combine to make me seek for relaxation and ease. Providence had so far smiled on my endeavours as to enable me to prepare for the indulgence of those feelings, in such manner as would be least injurious to the interests of my family. If, therefore, I accept this appointment, a sacrifice of that ease, of much social and domestic enjoyment, and of my material interests, must be the inevitable consequence: And, as my ambition was entirely gratified by my present sit-

uation and character in life, no motive of that kind can stimulate me to acceptance. Putting myself out of the question, the sole motive is the public good; and this motive, I confess, comes home to my feelings. The contest we are engaged in, appeared to me, in the first instance, just and necessary;—therefore I took an active part in it: as it became *dangerous*, I thought it the more *glorious*, and was stimulated to the greatest exertions in my power when the affairs of America were at the worst. Sensible of the want of arrangement in our monied affairs, the same considerations impel me to this undertaking, which I would embark in without hesitation, could I believe myself equal thereto; but fearing this may not be the case, it becomes indispensably necessary to make such stipulations as may give ease to my feelings, aid to my exertions, and tend to procure ample support to my conduct in office, so long as it is founded in, and guided by, a regard to the public prosperity.

In the first place, then, I am to inform congress, that the preparatory steps I had taken to procure to myself relaxation from business with least injury to the interests of my family, were by engaging in certain commercial establishments with persons in whom I had perfect confidence, as to their integrity, honour, and abilities. These establishments

I am bound in honour, and by contracts, to support to the extent agreed on. If, therefore, it be in the idea of congress, that the office of superintendant of finance is incompatible with commercial concerns and connexions, the point is settled; for I cannot, on any consideration, consent to violate engagements, or depart from those principles of honour which it is my pride to be governed by. If, on the contrary, congress have elected me to this office under the expectation that my mercantile connexions and engagements were to continue, an express declaration of their sentiments should appear on the minutes, that no doubt may arise, or reflection be cast, on this score hereafter.

I also think it indispensably necessary that the appointment of all persons who are to act in my office, (under the same roof, or in immediate connexion, with me,) should be made by myself; congress first agreeing that such secretaries, clerks, or officers, so to be appointed, are necessary, and fixing the salaries for each. I conceive that it will be impossible to execute the duties of this office with effect, unless the absolute power of dismissing from office, or employment, all persons whatever that are concerned in the official expenditure of public monies, be committed to the superintendant of finance; for, unless this power can be

exercised without control, I have little hopes of efficacy in the business of reformation, which is probably the most essential part of the duty.—These being the only positive stipulations that occur to me at this time, the determination of congress thereon will enable me to determine whether to accept or decline the appointment. I must, however, observe, that the act of congress of February, describing the duties of the superintendant of finance, requires the execution of many things for which adequate powers are not provided; and it cannot be expected that your officer can, in such case, be responsible. These, however, may be the subjects of future discussions.

With sentiments of the highest respect for you and congress, I have the honour to subscribe myself

Your excellency's

Most obedient and most humble serv't.

ROBERT MORRIS.

Some dissatisfaction was expressed in congress relative to the powers of appointment to, and dismissal from, office, claimed by Mr. Morris, and some affected to believe that they might be construed to comprehend the commander-in-chief, and heads of departments. In a conference with the

committee appointed to confer with him on the subject, Mr. Morris clearly and ably pointed out the necessity of the stipulations he had made: "the whole business of finance," he observed, "may be comprised in two short but comprehensive sentences, if I have proper notions on the subject; it is to raise the public revenues by such modes as may be most easy and most equal to the people, and to expend them in the most frugal, fair, and honest, manner.—In our case, the first part must ever be the business of congress, and the legislature of the respective states, because the powers of taxation cannot be delegated. The second, I take to be the most essential part of the duty of the superintendant of finance: he must ever have it in view to reduce the expenditures as nearly as possible to what in justice and in reason they ought to be; and to do this, he must be vested with power to dismiss from employment those officers he shall find unnecessary, unequal to their stations, inattentive to their duty, or dishonest in the exercise of it."

This difficulty being removed by the acquiescence of congress, with certain specified exceptions, in the views of Mr. Morris, he at length formally accepted the honourable appointment, in the following communication to the president of congress.

Philadelphia, May 14, 1781.

SIR,

The honour conferred by congress in appointing me superintendant of finance, their several resolutions of the twentieth March, twenty-first and twenty-seventh of April, which your excellency has been pleased to transmit, and a serious conviction of that duty which every citizen owes to his country, especially in times of public calamity, will no longer permit me to hesitate about the acceptance of that office, although I must again repeat that I have the fullest sense of my own inability. I shall, however, strive to find such assistance as will enable me, in some measure, to answer the reasonable expectations of congress, to whom I can promise for myself nothing more than honest industry. You will readily perceive that much time must be consumed in procuring proper officers, fixing on men for assistants whose abilities and integrity may be depended on, in laying plans for obtaining money with the greatest ease to the people, and expending it to the greatest advantage of the public, forming arrangements necessary to carry their plans into execution, and obtaining information as to the present state of things, in order that abuses may be, if possible, speedily and effectually remedied. Be-

sides this, it will be necessary that I should confer with the commander-in-chief on the various expenditures of the war, and the means of retrenching such as are unnecessary. Let me add that the account of my private business must be adjusted, so as that all my affairs may be put into the hands of other persons, and subjected to their management. My necessary commercial connexions, notwithstanding the decided sense of congress expressed in their resolution of the twentieth March, might, if the business were transacted by myself, give rise to illiberal reflections equally painful to me, and injurious to the public. This reason alone would deserve great attention; but further I expect that my whole time, study, and attention, will be necessarily devoted to the various business of my department.

Having thus stated some of the causes which will prevent me from immediately entering on the arduous task assigned me, I pray leave to call the attention of congress to the advanced season, and then I am persuaded their own good sense will render it unnecessary for me to observe that very little can be expected from my exertions during the present campaign: they will, therefore, easily perceive the propriety of the request I am to make, that the business may go on according to the present arrangements, or such other as con-

gress may devise until I can take it up, which I promise to do as speedily as possible. By this means I may be enabled so to dispose of the several members of my department as to form them into a regular system; whereas, by throwing the whole immediately upon me, I shall be inevitably involved in a labyrinth of confusion from which no human efforts can ever afterwards extricate me.

Another consideration of great magnitude, to which I must also pray the attention of congress, is the present public debts. I am sure that no gentleman can hope that these should be immediately paid out of an empty treasury. If I am to receive and consider the application on that subject, if I am to be made responsible, that alone will, I fear, be full employment for the life of one man, and some other must be chosen to attend to the present, and provide for the future. But this is not all: if, from that or from any other cause, I am forced to commit a breach of faith, or even to incur the appearance of it, from that moment my utility ceases. *In accepting the office bestowed on me, I sacrifice much of my interest, my ease, my domestic enjoyments, and internal tranquillity. If I know my own heart, I make these sacrifices with a disinterested view to the service of my country. I am ready to go still further;* AND THE UNITED STATES

MAY COMMAND EVERY THING I HAVE, EXCEPT MY INTEGRITY, and the loss of that would effectually disable me from serving them more.

What I have to pray, then, is, that the adjustment of all past transactions, and of all that relates to the present system, may be completed by the modes already adopted, that whatever remains unpaid may become a funded debt, and that it may in that form be committed to me to provide for the yearly interest, and for the *eventual* discharge of the principal. This task I will cheerfully undertake, and if in the progress of things, I am enabled to go further, with equal cheerfulness it shall be done; but I must again repeat my serious conviction that the least breach of faith must ruin us forever. It is not from vanity that I mention the expectations which the public seem to have formed from my appointment; on the contrary, I am persuaded they are raised on a weak foundation, and I must lament them because I foresee that they must be disappointed. I must, therefore, entreat that no flattering prospect of immediate relief may be raised.

Congress well know that the public credit cannot be restored without method, economy, and punctual performance of contracts. Time is necessary to each; and, therefore, the removal of those evils we labour under can be expected from time only. To

hold out a different idea would deceive the people, and consequently injure the public service.

I am sure it is unnecessary to add, before I close this letter, that I confidently expect my measures will meet with the fullest support from congress, so long as they are honestly directed to the general welfare.—In this conviction, and with every sentiment of respectful attention,

I have the honour to be,

Your excellency's

Most obedient and humble servant,

ROBERT MORRIS.

At this period, a deep gloom enveloped the prospects of America, the darkness of which may be imagined from the summary presented by Washington at the commencement of his Military Journal, on the first of May, 1781.—"Instead of having magazines filled with provisions, we have a scanty pittance scattered here and there in the several states:—Instead of having our arsenals well supplied with military stores, they are poorly provided, and the workmen all leaving them:—Instead of having the various articles of field equipage ready to deliver, the quarter-master-general is but now applying to the several states (as the dernier resort,) to provide these things for their troops re-

spectively:—Instead of having a regular system of transportation established upon credit, or funds in the quarter-master's hands to defray the contingent expenses of it, we have neither the one nor the other; and all that business, or a great part of it, being done by military impressment, we are daily and hourly oppressing the people, souring their tempers, and alienating their affections:—Instead of having the regiments completed to the new establishments, scarce any state in the union has, at this hour, one-eighth part of its quota in the field; and there is little prospect, that I can see, of ever getting more than one half:—In a word, instead of having every thing in readiness to take the field, we have nothing; and, instead of having the prospect of a glorious offensive campaign before us, we have a bewildered and gloomy prospect of a defensive one, unless we should receive a powerful aid of ships, land troops, and money, from our generous allies: and these at present are too contingent to build upon."

Such were the clouds which overshadowed the campaign of 1781; but they were dissipated by the resources and energy of Mr. Morris. Uniting great political talents with a degree of mercantile enterprise, information, and credit, seldom equalled in any country, and urged by the critical state of pub-

lic affairs and the pressing wants of the army, he entered immediately on the duties of his office, without reference to the stipulation touching the prior arrangements of his mercantile affairs. The occasion required that he should bring his private credit in aid of the public resources, and pledge himself personally and extensively, for articles of the most absolute necessity, which could not be otherwise obtained. Condemning the system of violence and of legal fraud, which had too long been practised, as being calculated to defeat its own object, he sought the gradual restoration of confidence, by the only means which could restore it,—a punctual and faithful compliance with the engagements he should make. Herculean as was this task, in the existing derangement of the American finances, he entered upon it with courage, and if not completely successful, certainly did more than could have been supposed practicable with the means placed in his hands. Incited by a penetrating and indefatigable mind, and supported by the confidence which his probity and punctuality, through the various grades of commercial pursuits, had established, he discarded, in this threatening conjuncture, considerations applying forcibly to his own reputation, and devoted his entire attention to the resuscitation of public credit. Promulgating his deter

mination to meet every engagement with punctuality, he was sought with eagerness by all who had the means of supplying the public wants. The scene suddenly changed: faithfully performing his promise, the public deficiencies began to disappear, and military operations no longer were suspended by failure of the necessary means. Strong in his personal credit, and true to his engagements, the superintendant became every day stronger in the public confidence, and unassisted, except by a small portion of a small loan of six millions of livres tournois, granted by the court of Versailles to the United States, this individual citizen gave food and motion to the main army; proving by his conduct, that credit is the offspring of integrity, economy, system, and punctuality.*

When Mr. Morris assumed the duties of his office, the treasury was more than two millions and an half of dollars in arrears; the greater part of this debt was of such a nature that the payment could neither be avoided, nor delayed; and Dr. Franklin was therefore under the necessity of ordering back from Amsterdam, money which had been sent thither for the purpose of being shipped to America: if he had not taken this step, the bills of exchange

* Marsh. Life of Washington, IV, 457. H. Lee's Memoirs, II, 305.

drawn by congress must have been protested, and the tottering credit of the government in Europe, been wholly prostrated.* Congress had now solemnly resolved to discontinue the emission of paper bills of credit, which had been carried to a ruinous but unavoidable extent: the zeal and public spirit of the people induced them at first to receive these bills as an equivalent to the precious metals; but, not being, at will, convertible into gold and silver, and no fund being provided for their redemption, depreciation followed, as a necessary result, and with it the loss of public credit. The fate of this enormous mass of continental currency is well known; for the distress incurred by its rapid depreciation and final fall, was felt through all the ramifications of society. But while we are doing justice to surviving fiscal merit, it would be ungrateful to withhold the expression of our obligations to the defunct continental money. Without its aid, we might yet have been a British dependency. Individuals severely suffered by its scourging depreciation; but by it, the nation gained all its advances to freedom in the first years of the war. Its memory should be respected, although its fall was inglorious and unlamented. One solitary tribute only

* Morris' Statement. Finances. p. 5.

was paid to its services: it was buried with the honours of war, in Rhode Island, and a numerous procession attended the splendid repository of its remains, over which an eloquent eulogy, enumerating its services, was pronounced, as over those of a departed friend and benefactor. An emission of paper money, in lieu of the former, and called *red money*, had been issued by the state. When the obsequies of the departed benefactor were performed, a pithy orator held up a bundle of red money, and exclaimed, "be thou also ready; for thou shalt surely die:"—a prophecy that was soon after fulfilled.—However ludicrous this ceremony may appear, the subject of it laid the foundation of our independence, and it is devoutly to be wished, that its merited motto may long continue to be read by future generations,—Exegi monumentum ære perennius. Our ancestors, by bearing the unequal burden of depreciation, saved to the present generation the necessity of sinking the paper debt; and we have, therefore, no cause to reprobate it.

The emission of bills on the credit of the colonies having ceased, requisitions on the states, which possessed the whole power of taxation, and continued to issue paper money, were substituted for the purpose of supplying the army with provisions; and they were required to furnish certain specified

articles for the subsistence of the troops, according to a ratio established by congress. But this subsidy, in itself inadequate to the national necessity, was so shamefully neglected by the states, that the army was on the eve of dismemberment for want of food, and even the fortitude of Washington was shaken. Had it even been sufficient to answer the existing exigences, it could not be considered as having accomplished its object, so long as the same disorder continued to reign in the public expenses. The exchequer suffered still less from the poverty of the revenues than from the prodigalities it had to supply. Congress had discovered that this primordial defect in the administration of the finances, was the source of those perpetual embarrassments which had beset them since the commencement of the revolution; and the appointment of a superintendant, was the result of their firm resolution to introduce into that department a rigorous system of order and economy. It was necessary to select for this important office, a man of high reputation, possessed of extensive knowledge and experience in financial affairs. These indispensable requisites were found in Robert Morris. His mind was active, his manners pure, his fortune ample, and his zeal for independence extremely ardent. If the charge imposed on him was ponderous, the talents

and firmness with which it was sustained, were no less astonishing. No other man in the community would, probably, have been competent to manage the great concerns which it involved; for no one possessed the same happy expedient of raising supplies, nor enjoyed a greater share of the public confidence. He was not slow in substituting regularity for disorder, and good faith in the room of fraud. The first and most essential quality of an administrator being exactness in the fulfillment of his obligations, he adhered with rigour to an invariable punctuality.* He soon gathered the fruit of this system: instead of a general distrust, there sprung up, by degrees, a universal confidence, and every one was ready to exclaim, in the words of Washington,—"The abilities of the present financier have done wonders."

Public and private distress every where existed: the credit of the government was so far destroyed, as to form a foundation on which the enemy erected the most sanguine expectations of conquest: many public officers could not perform their duties, without payment of the arrears due from the treasury, and without immediate aid, must have been imprisoned for debts which enabled them to live. The public treasury was reduced to so low an ebb, that

*Botta's War of Independence. iii, 339.

some of the members of the board of war declared to Mr. Morris, they had not the means of sending an express to the army.* Starvation threatened the troops; and the paper bills of credit had so far depreciated, that it required a burdensome mass to pay for an article of clothing.—But the gigantic efforts of the financier dissipated these appalling prospects with an almost miraculous rapidity. To him it was principally owing that the armies of America did not disband; and that congress, instead of yielding to an inevitable necessity, recovered the means, not only of sustaining the efforts of the enemy, but of resuming the offensive with vigour and success.

The establishment of the Bank of North America was one of the first, and most prominent, acts in the administration of Mr. Morris; and but for this institution, his plans of finance must have been totally frustrated. Previous to the war, he had laid the foundation of a bank, and established a credit in Europe for the purpose of carrying the scheme into execution. His design, however, was defeated by the revolution, and he now devoted to the benefit of his country, the knowledge that he had acquired of the principles of banking, and of the advantages

* Debates on the renewal of the charter of the bank of North America, p. 47.

resulting to a commercial community from a well regulated bank, by enabling merchants, in cases of exigency, to anticipate their funds, and to take advantage of occasions offering well grounded schemes of speculation. On the seventeenth of May, he submitted to the consideration of congress, his plan for establishing a national bank, accompanied with explanatory observations. "Anticipation of taxes and funds," he remarked, "is all that ought to be expected from any system of paper credit: this seems as likely to rise into a fabric equal to the weight, as any I have yet seen, or thought of; and I submit whether it may not be necessary and proper, that congress make immediate application to the several states to invest them with the powers of incorporating a bank, and for prohibiting all other banks or bankers in these states, at least during the war."—The capital of the bank was established at four hundred thousand dollars, in shares of four hundred dollars each, payable in gold or silver. Twelve directors were to manage the affairs of the institution, who were empowered, under certain restrictions, to increase the capital of the bank. It was to be incorporated by the government, and be subject to the inspection of the superintendant of finance, with the privilege, at all times, of access to the books and papers. Such were the bases and principal

features of the establishment. The utility to be derived from it was that the notes of the bank, payable on demand, should be declared legal money for the payment of all duties and taxes in each of the United States, and receivable into the public treasury as gold or silver. This necessary and beneficial institution received the full approbation of congress, on the twenty-sixth of May: it was resolved, with the dissenting voice of Massachusetts alone, that the subscribers should be incorporated as soon as the subscriptions were filled;—that the several states should be requested to provide that no other banks, or bankers, should be established during the war;—that the notes of the bank should be receivable in payment of all taxes, duties, and debts, due to the United States;—and that the several state legislatures should be earnestly required to pass laws, making it felony to counterfeit the notes of the bank.

In consequence of these resolutions, the plan of the bank was published by Mr. Morris, with a suitable and urgent address to the public. "To ask the end," he observed, "which it is proposed to answer by this institution of a bank, is merely to call the public attention to the situation of our affairs. A depreciating paper currency has unhappily been the source of infinite private mischief, numberless

frauds, and the greatest distress. The national calamities have moved with an equal pace, and the public credit has received the deepest injury. This is a circumstance so unusual in a republican government, that we may boldly affirm it cannot continue a moment after the several legislatures have determined to take those vigorous and effectual measures, to which the public voice now loudly commands their attention. In the mean time, the exigencies of the United States requires an anticipation of our revenues; while, at the same time, there is not such confidence established as will call out, for that purpose, the funds of individual citizens.—The use, then, of a bank, is to aid the government by their monies and credit, for which they will have every proper reward and security; —to gain from individuals that credit which property, abilities, and integrity, never fail to command;—to supply the loss of that paper money, which, becoming more and more useless, calls every day more loudly for its final redemption;—and to give a new spring to commerce, in the moment when, by the removal of all restrictions, the citizens of America shall enjoy and possess that freedom for which they contend."

Mr. Morris, from motives of official duty, as well as the conviction of its utility, continued incessantly

to promote the progress of this plan; but such was the public distress, and the gloomy prospect of public affairs, that, notwithstanding the zealous endeavours of individuals, the necessary sum was not subscribed until the year 1782; and it was some time after the business of the bank was fairly commenced, before the actual sum paid in by individual subscribers, amounted to seventy thousand dollars. In the mean time the exertions of the financier were unremitting. He addressed a circular letter to the most influential men in the country, appealing to their characters and zeal, for their support, and requesting them in the most earnest manner to urge their friends and fellow citizens to become proprietors of the bank stock: "every subscriber," he observed, "will find his own interest benefitted in proportion to the capital he deposits, and at the same time they will have the satisfaction to be considered, forever, as the promoters of an institution that has been found beneficial to other countries, and inevitably must be so, in the highest degree, to this;—an institution that most probably will continue as long as the United States, and that will probably become as useful to commerce and agriculture, in the days of peace, as it must be to government during the war." "I ask you to devote some of your time to promote this infant plan; which,

as it gathers strength, may in the end prove the means of saving the liberties, lives, and property, of the virtuous part of America." In a communication to Mr. Jay, then minister at the court of Spain, he suggested the propriety of submitting the plan of the bank to that government, for the purpose of obtaining an advance of money for its support. "An additional reason," he remarked in this letter, "for the institution, is to supply the place of all other paper, which it is my design to absorb as soon as possible, and thereby relieve the people from those doubts and anxieties which have weakened our efforts, relaxed our industry, and impaired our wealth." "Finally, one very strong motive which has impelled my conduct, on this occasion, is to unite the several states more closely together in one general money connexion, and indissolubly to attach many powerful individuals to the cause of our country, by the strong principle of self-interest."—Mr. Morris was well aware that the capital of four hundred thousand dollars was very inadequate to the object which he had in view; but the fear that he would be unable to fill a larger subscription, and the conviction of the evil consequences that would result from the failure of the plan, induced him to limit it, in the first instance, to that sum: but his prospective views were more extensive. "It is

weakness," he observed, "to be deterred by difficulties from a proper pursuit; I am, therefore, determined that the bank shall be *well* supported, until it can support itself, and then it will support us. I mean that the stock, instead of four hundred thousand dollars, shall be four hundred thousand pounds, and perhaps more. How soon it will rise to that amount it is impossible to foresee: but this we may venture to assert, that if a considerable sum of specie can speedily be thrown into it, the period when its force and utility will be felt and known, is not far off."—In the month of July, Mr. Morris endeavoured, by powerful but ineffectual arguments, to induce the governor of Havanna to furnish him with four hundred thousand Mexican dollars, for bills on Paris, guaranteed by the French minister in America. His object was to double the capital of the bank by depositing this sum in its vaults, thereby facilitating the anticipation of taxes, and giving its operations such force as would draw the attention of the citizens, and induce them to afford it additional support.—Previous to the election for directors, held on the first of November, 1781, he addressed a circular letter to the governors of the states, stating the distresses created by the want of a circulating medium, and urging the

enactment of proper laws to promote the currency of the bills of the bank.

Mr. Morris, finding that it was impracticable to procure the whole amount of the capital from individual subscriptions, subscribed, on account of the United States, for stock to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars; and it was principally upon this fund, that the operations of the institution were commenced. Four hundred and fifty thousand dollars had been imported from France, and deposited in the bank, and he had determined, from the moment of its arrival to subscribe for those shares which remained vacant; but one half the sum was exhausted by the public expenditures before the institution could be organised.—At length, on the thirty-first of December, 1781, a charter of incorporation was granted by congress, limiting the capital to ten millions of dollars. Messrs. Willing, Fitzsimmons, Nesbit, Wilson, Hill, Osgood, Cadwalader, Morris, Caldwell, Inglis, Meredith, Bingham, and Matlack, were appointed the directors, and Thomas Willing president of the board. On the same day, congress recommended to the several state legislatures to enact laws for facilitating the full operation of the institution; and on the seventh of January, 1782, the bank was opened, and individuals begun to deposit their money. Mr.

Morris seized this occasion of renewing his solicitations to the several state governors relative to the passage of laws for the protection and promotion of the institution, the advantages of which, he displayed in inviting colours: "It will facilitate," said he, "the management of the finances of the United States. The several states may, when their respective necessities require, and the abilities of the bank will permit, derive occasional advantages and accommodation from it. It will afford to the individuals of all the states, a medium for their intercourse with each other, and for the payment of taxes, more convenient than the precious metals, and equally safe. It will have a tendency to increase both the internal and external commerce of North America, and undoubtedly will be infinitely useful to all the traders of every state in the union; provided, as I have already said, it is conducted on the principles of equity, justice, prudence, and economy.—"On the first of April, 1782, the assembly of Pennsylvania agreed to, and passed, the state act of incorporation; Delaware pursued the same course; and other states passed laws for the protection of the bank.

The country realized an extraordinary benefit from this institution, as it enabled Mr. Morris to use, by anticipation, the funds of the nation;—a

power of infinite value, when prudently and judiciously exercised. The sudden restoration of public and private credit, which took place on the establishment of the bank, was an event as extraordinary in itself, as any domestic occurrence during the progress of the revolution.* Its first operations were greatly assisted by the arrival of a large sum, in specie, from Europe and the West Indies; and, although the subscriptions to the capital stock were not paid with punctuality, from the great scarcity of money, yet, as the subscribers were generally men of property, and liable to the full amount of their subscriptions, the directors of the bank were encouraged to proceed in the business.

The aid afforded by the bank to this country, in a period of great gloom and distress, was very extensive, considering its limited capital. Mr. Morris, as before stated, subscribed two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in his official capacity; but the finances were so much exhausted, that, in the following December, the bank was obliged to release the United States from their subscription, to the amount of two hundred thousand dollars; the remaining fifty thousand having been sold by the superintendant, to individuals in Holland.

* Paine's Dissert. on Governments.

On the twelfth of January, 1782, in less than two weeks after the bank was opened, the directors loaned to the United States, - - $100,000

In the month of February following,	100,000
In the month of March following, - -	100,000
In the month of June following. - -	100,000
Making together the sum of - - -	$400,000

In May, 1782, the state of Pennsylvania being unable to pay its quota of the public contribution, the bank lent it the sum of - - - - - - - - - - $80,000

so that, with a capital of three hundred thousand dollars, the bank actually advanced, for the public service, within six months after its organization, the sum of four hundred and eighty thousand dollars; and this will appear more extraordinary when it is recollected, that the heavy losses of individuals by the depreciation of the continental money were then fresh in the public recollection, and occasioned such a distrust of every kind of paper engagements, that the circulation of bank notes was very limited, and the bank could derive but little aid from them. These loans were not finally reimbursed until the first of January, 1784.*

* Facts respecting the bank of North America, p. 6.

But the direct loans of the bank were not the only aid which it afforded. Considerable facilities were obtained by discounting the notes of individuals, and thereby anticipating the receipts of public money: besides which, the persons who had contracted for furnishing rations to the army, were also aided with discounts, on the public credit. The credit and confidence that were revived by means of this institution, formed the basis of that system through which the anticipations made, within the bounds of the United States, had, upon the first day of July, 1783, exceeded eight hundred and twenty thousand dollars. If the sum due, indirectly, for the notes of individuals discounted, be taken into consideration, the total will exceed ONE MILLION! "It may then," says Mr. Morris, "be not only asserted but demonstrated, that without the establishment of the national bank, the business of the department of finance could not have been performed."

Besides these important benefits to the public cause, emanating from the bank, the state of Pennsylvania, and city of Philadelphia, were greatly accommodated by loans obtained from it. The state was thereby enabled to provide for the defence of the frontiers, and to relieve the officers of the Pennsylvania line from the distress resulting from

a failure of the internal revenue, which had been mortgaged to pay the interest of the certificates granted to them for military services. By loans from the bank, the city authorities relieved the pressing wants of the capital, which suffered extremely from the exhausted state of its funds. The accommodations furnished to the citizens promoted internal improvements, imparted fresh vigour to trade, and greatly increased the circulating medium by the issue of bills, which, being convertible at will into gold or silver, were universally received as equal thereto, and commanded the most unbounded confidence. Great numbers availed themselves of the security afforded by the vaults of the bank to deposit their cash, which, from the impossibility of investing it advantageously, had long been concealed. These events, together with the constant current of deposits in the course of trade, authorized the directors to increase their business to a most unprecedented extent. The consequence of this was a speedy and perceptible change in the state of affairs, both public and private.*

The prosperity of the bank, and the success of his favourite scheme, proved highly grateful to the

* Edinburg Encyclopœdia, Philad. edit. *sub art.*

feelings of Mr. Morris: it was the first important operation in his financial career, and it speedily produced all the benefits which he had predicted. "The establishment of the national bank," he observes in a letter dated the twenty-fifth of March, 1782, "answers all the purposes expected from it, and even exceeds in success, the most sanguine hopes that had been formed by its warmest advocates. As the operations of the bank become extended, the benefits of the institution will be felt to the extreme parts of the United States: their notes acquire every day a greater extent of circulation, and they have obtained the most perfect confidence hereabouts." But while the institution was thus rapidly invigorating the public credit, and promoting the public prosperity, ungenerous and base aspersions against its founder were disseminated throughout the continent, and many individuals unacquainted with the nature of the national bank, and the official connexions and transactions of Mr. Morris, entertained the most illiberal ideas of the increase of his private fortune. He, at length, condescended, in a letter of the first of May, 1782, to regret these false and slanderous accusations. "The bank," he remarks, "is a mere private thing, in which any man may be interested who chooses to purchase stock. Personally, I have no

other concern in it than any other gentleman may have who pleases to invest his property in it. The government have nothing to do with the bank, except merely to prevent the directors, should they be so inclined, from extending their operations in a manner disproportionate to their capital, thereby endangering their credit. Any aid which the government derives from the bank is by lodging proper securities with them, and borrowing money for short periods on the discount of interest, at the rate of six per cent. which is receiving ninety-nine, and paying an hundred, at the end of two months. The monies so borrowed, are punctually repaid.—By accepting the office which I now hold, I was obliged to neglect my own private affairs. I have made no speculations in consequence of my office, *and instead of being enriched, I am poorer this day than I was a year ago.*"

At the commencement of the year 1781, when the overwhelming distress of the army had driven congress, and the commander-in-chief, almost to desperation, Mr. Morris, on his own private credit, supplied the suffering troops with several thousand barrels of flour, and thus prevented the design of congress to authorise general Washington to seize all the provisions that could be found within twenty miles of his camp: the sanction of this procedure

by congress, would have proved extremely detrimental to the cause of the country; and it was avoided solely through the private credit and resources of the financier. In a letter to Thomas Lowrey, Esq. of New Jersey, on this subject, dated twenty-ninth of May, 1781, he makes the following remarks and assurances: "It seems that general Washington is now in the utmost necessity for some immediate supplies of flour, and I must either undertake to procure them, or the *laws of necessity must be put in force*, which I shall ever study to avoid and prevent. I must, therefore, request that you will immediately use your best skill, judgment, and industry, in purchasing on the lowest terms you can, one thousand barrels of sweet, sound flour, and in sending it forward to camp in the most expeditious and least expensive manner that you can contrive. To obtain this flour readily and on good terms, I know you must pledge your private credit, and, as I have not the money ready, although the means of raising it are in my power, I must also pledge myself to you, which I do most solemnly, as an officer of the public;—but, lest you should, like some others, believe more in private than in public credit, I hereby pledge myself to pay you the cost and charges of this flour in hard money." "I will enable you most honourably to

fulfill your engagements. My character, utility, and the public good, are much more deeply concerned in doing so than yours is."—In a letter of the same date, addressed to major general Schuyler, the disinterestedness and purity of his exertions for the public benefit, are equally apparent. "You will probably have heard," he writes, "that congress have done me the honour to bestow their confidence by appointing me to the important station of superintendant of the finances of North America; a station that makes me tremble when I think of it, and which nothing could tempt me to accept but a gleam of hope that my exertions may possibly retrieve this poor distressed country from the ruin with which it is now threatened, merely for want of system and economy in expending, and vigour in raising, the public monies. Pressed by all my friends, acquaintance, and fellow citizens, and still more pressed by the *necessity*, the *absolute necessity*, of a change in our monied system, to work salvation, I have yielded, and taken a load on my shoulders which it is not possible to get clear of, without the faithful support and assistance of those good citizens who not only wish, but will promote, the service of the country. In this light, I now make application to you, sir, whose abilities I know, and whose zeal I have every rea-

son to believe. The object, however, before me, is not of such magnitude as to require any great exertion of either, at present, although it is of sufficient importance to induce the invocation.—General Washington is distressed for want of an immediate supply of flour, and as I am not even yet fairly entered in the execution of my office, and when I do, have to meet an empty treasury and a totally exhausted credit, it must be some time before funds can be created, or money be commanded for any purpose whatever. I must, therefore, request that you will take the most speedy and effectual measures to deliver to the order of his excellency, general Washington, one thousand barrels of flour. I have the means of raising hard money to pay for this flour, and the charges on it; but the longer time I am allowed to do it, the more I can consult the public interest. I take it for granted that you can, upon your own credit and engagements, either borrow the money, for a few months, necessary to accomplish this business, or that you can make the purchases on such credit, without giving higher prices; and for your reimbursement you may either take me as a public or a private man; for I pledge myself to repay you with hard money wholly, if required, or part hard, part paper, if so you transact the business. In short,

I promise, and you may rely that no consideration whatever shall induce me to make a promise that I do not see my capability to perform, that I will enable you to fulfill your engagements for this supply of flour: if you find it convenient you may draw on me for hard money, or paper, payable in such sums, and at such times as you can conceive may not be inconvenient, judging by what I have said on this subject." In advising the commander-in-chief of these arrangements, he observes, that the distress of his army for want of bread, had been made known to him by a committee of congress: "I found myself," he continues, "immediately impressed with the strongest desire to afford you relief. Not being prepared in my official character, with funds, or means of accomplishing the supplies you need, I have written to major general Schuyler, and to Thomas Lowrey, Esq. of New Jersey, requesting their immediate exertions to procure, upon their own credit, one thousand barrels of flour each, and to send the same forward in parcels, as fast as procured, to camp, deliverable to your excellency's order; and I have pledged myself to pay them in hard money, for the cost and charges, within a month, six weeks, or two months. I shall make it a point to provide the money, being determined never to make an engagement that

cannot be fulfilled; for if, by any means, I should fail in this respect, I will quit my office as useless from that moment."—Thus, by a liberal use of his private credit, he afforded food to, and restored order in, the army, at a period when starvation and mutiny stalked hand in hand throughout the ranks.

In the same year, the talents and integrity of Mr. Morris attracted an honourable mark of confidence from the legislature of Pennsylvania, by his appointment as the agent of the state, to meet the requisitions of congress. At this period, the occasional separation of the army was inevitable, in order to obtain daily food. The eastern states took effectual measures to provide and transport all the necessary supplies in their power, which consisted of meat, salt, and liquor. Bread, however, was still wanting; and this was only procurable, to any extent, in Pennsylvania and Maryland, so completely exhausted were the states of New York and New Jersey, which had been, from the year 1776, the continued seat of war. Pennsylvania, as a country abounding in wheat, was that from which was drawn the greater part of the supplies of flour for the use of the army. The want of money had occasioned, towards the beginning of 1781, an extreme slowness in the delivery of these supplies, and there

was reason to apprehend a continuance of the most distressing disappointments in this essential article. After having relieved the wants of the moment, by his private credit, Mr. Morris proposed, and undertook, to furnish all the specific requisitions made by congress on Pennsylvania, during the current year, on receiving as a reimbursement, the taxes imposed by a law which had been recently enacted. On the twenty-fifth of June, the contract was agreed to by the assembly of the state, and on the sixth of July following, congress passed a resolution approving of the transaction, as having a tendency to promote the public service of the United States. Thus were supplies, which the government found itself incapable of furnishing, raised by an individual.—This masterly negotiation involved, in the aggregate, a sum exceeding one million, one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. The supplies were furnished in anticipation, before the money was obtained from the state treasury; and, while he thus enabled the state promptly to comply with the demands of congress, his plan of operations was more economical than any other, which, under the then state of things, could have been adopted.—The state of parties, at that period, in Pennsylvania, rendered this appointment peculiarly flattering to Mr. Morris, and highly expressive

of the respect universally entertained for his capacity and integrity. Political feuds, principally arising from a difference of opinion respecting the state constitution of 1776, extensively prevailed, and the conduct of the ruling party, which was opposed to any change in that feeble instrument, was, on many occasions, unintelligent and illiberal. Mr. Morris was regarded as the head of what it was their pleasure to term the aristocratic party; that is, of that portion of men of wealth, great public consideration, superior education, and liberal ideas, who ardently desired a more energetic form of government than could exist under a single legislature, and numerous executive council. Could the legislature have dispensed with his services, or had there been any man among the party in power, capable of fulfilling the trust, it is probable that he would not have received the appointment. That man, however, did not exist. The manner in which it was executed by Mr. Morris, showed how well he merited the confidence of the legislature, as well as a skillfulness of management which no one but himself could have effected.*

The following letter will exhibit the immense advances made by Mr. Morris on account of the state of Pennsylvania.

* Edinburg Encyclopœdia, Philad. edit. *sub art.*

Philadelphia, 23d August, 1781.

His Excellency the President of Pennsylvania.

Sir,—I have this day settled an account with Thomas Smith, Esq. the loan-officer, and have his receipt for one hundred and fifty-four thousand and seventy-four dollars, and seventy-six-ninetieths, on account of the four-tenths of the new emissions due by this state to congress. As yet, I have not drawn one shilling from the treasury of Pennsylvania; and am, of consequence, so much in advance. There still remains due to Mr. Smith, on these four-tenths, a balance of two hundred and thirty-five thousand, nine hundred and twenty-five dollars and fourteen-ninetieths. Those who have the warrants on him for this money, are clamorous to obtain payment.

I had procured on account of Pennsylvania, a considerable quantity of flour. In the state of New York, one thousand barrels; in the state of New Jersey, four thousand barrels; and in this city, four thousand barrels. For all these I obtained credit; and with respect to the last, not finding consumption for it here, I have lately made payment of part, by the redelivery of three thousand three hundred and ninety barrels; which was a desirable circumstance; first, because the consumption of that article was, and probably would be, in places where

it could be so purchased as to save on the transportation; secondly, because the risk of spoiling, or other loss, which I began to apprehend, was not incurred; and thirdly, because, as this article would probably fall in price, it might be procured, hereafter, on easy terms. My reasons for purchasing in New York and New Jersey, were, that there would be a saving in the carriage, which is a benefit to the United States, and that there would also be a saving in the price, which is a benefit to this state.—From what has been said, then, your excellency will perceive, that my credit stands pledged for five thousand six hundred and ten barrels of flour. Some of the payments have already become due, and I have found means to satisfy them. The rest will shortly be so, which will create new difficulties. Had I drawn money from the state treasury at the time when the purchases were made, I must have exchanged it for specie. The rate, at those times, was from five to six, and even seven, for one; but whenever it should have been known that it was drawn from the treasury and sold on public account, in all human probability it would have depreciated still more. The credit, therefore, which I have obtained, has been beneficial, by giving time for that change of opinion which could alone operate an appreciation. Had

the collection of taxes taken place as early as I was induced to believe it would, the paper would now be nearly, if not entirely, equal to specie: But, at the present rate of exchange, it will require from eighty to an hundred thousand dollars to fulfill my engagements for this flour.

The payments on my contracts for rations will shortly commence, and your excellency, from the former expenditures at the several posts, will be able to form a more adequate idea than I can, what those payments will amount to. To all this, I must add, that I have every reason to believe that other considerable supplies from this state, will soon become indispensable; and of consequence, the most urgent demand for money be immediately created. I have also engaged, if his excellency general Washington should obtain a quantity of flour, to be delivered on the North River, to the use of the army, as part of this state's quota of supplies, to repay the same quantity of flour to his order here, or on the Chesapeake, as he may direct.

I have thought it proper to make this full communication, that the supreme executive of the state may be informed of what is passing in their affairs. You will clearly perceive that my situation is far from agreeable; yet, such as it is, I will struggle

under it, and adopt every expedient which may probably afford relief; being determined not to draw money from the treasury, until the interest of the state shall invite, or inevitable necessity compels me to it.

I have the honour to be,
with all possible repect,
Your excellency's most obedient,
and humble servant,
ROBERT MORRIS.

The appreciation of the state paper, alluded to in this letter, was one of the first benefits derived from the administration of Mr. Morris. It was a leading object to restore the paper money of Pennsylvania to its specified value, because the legislature had assigned it as a fund for the purchase of specific supplies, required by congress, when they appointed the superintendant of finance their agent for that purpose. The paper in question was raised from so low a rate as six for one, to that of two for one; and it would have been brought nearly, if not entirely, to par, had not some measures intervened which, though well intended, were not judicious. Indeed, an operation of this kind is so delicate, that the least derangement or interference, proves fatal. The plan adopted by him was to make all his negociations in paper money, by sell-

ing bills of exchange for that purpose, and afterwards paying it at a smaller rate of depreciation than that by which it was received; and, at each successive operation, the rate was lowered by accepting it on the same terms, for bills of exchange, at which it had been previously paid. It was never applied to the purchase of the specific supplies, because it was checked in the progress towards par, and therefore, if it had been paid out in any quantity from the treasury, those who received it would have suffered by the consequent depreciation. If the measures determined on for calling it in, had been pursued, it might again have risen in value, so that the state would have been obliged to redeem at par, what had been issued at one half. "In a word," Mr. Morris remarks, "the view of those evils which inevitably follow from the issuing of paper money, and which always have attended that measure in a greater or smaller degree, rendered it most advisable to purchase for the state with specie, and supply the want of cash by the use of credit, until sufficient funds could be raised by the taxes then levying." *

The services rendered, by Mr. Morris, to the southern army, under the command of general

* Morris' Statement. Finances, pp. 5,—6.

Greene, were as extensive as the embarrassed state of the finances would permit, notwithstanding the contrary assertions in Johnson's life of that officer. This writer, with a partiality which every sentiment of gratitude condemns; with a want of dignity inimical to the principles which ought to actuate the correct biographer; and with a negligence in the statement of facts which essentially detracts from the authority of his compilation; labours incessantly to lessen the merits of the financier, and to defame the memory, and disparage the services, of a man, without whose exertions all the physical force of the country would have proved unavailing. The slanders which operated to the detriment of the financier during his life, were promptly and easily, repelled, when he condescended to notice them at all; but it is the duty of those who survive, and who are impressed with the immense results of his indispensable exertions, to resist all outrages on his character, whether they consist in secret suggestions or open accusations. All the calumnies heaped upon Mr. Morris, from the charges exhibited by Mr. Laurens, on the floor of congress, in 1779, down to the publication of judge Johnson, in 1822, could be readily and substantially refuted. But a vast difference exists between the first and last accusations: the honourable and noble minded

Laurens brought the transaction which has heretofore been mentioned, before the national council, in order to afford to Mr. Morris, the most secure and solid means of vindicating his character. The principal motive which originated the remarks of judge Johnson appears to have been the desire of exalting his hero at the expense of the financier. The gallant Greene needed no borrowed plumes.

The mode of supplying general Greene with funds was a prominent cause of hostility. That distinguished officer, in the campaign of 1781 in South Carolina, fully justified the favourable opinion entertained of him by general Washington. His troops bore every hardship and privation with a patience and constancy which deserved to be held up for universal admiration. Their situation was frequently deplorable in the extreme. At one period, there were three hundred men without arms, and more than one thousand, so naked that they could only be put on duty in cases of a desperate nature. They had been, during the whole winter, in want of arms and clothing; their subsistence was wretched, and they had neither rum, nor any kind of spirits. The difficulties of the army were so numerous, and its wants so pressing, that general Greene experienced the most painful anxieties and embarrassments; and it is merely necessary to

mention, in illustration of the nature of his services, that he was actually seven months in the field without taking off his clothes. "At the battle of Eutaw Springs," he remarks, "hundreds of my men were as naked as they were born. Posterity will scarcely believe that the bare loins of many brave men who carried death into the enemy's ranks, at the Eutaw, were galled by their cartouch-boxes, while a folded rag, or a tuft of moss, protected the shoulders from sustaining the same injury from the musket."

The unhappy state of affairs in the southern department, the total inability of the financier to relieve these distresses, and the employment by him of a confidential agent to attend the southern army, and supply, at seasons of extreme want, certain small sums to general Greene, for particular purposes, are the bases of the charges preferred against Mr. Morris, relative to his neglect of that army. Nothing could be more unjust and ungrateful than to attack, at such a perilous moment, the character of a man, who had saved the finances of the country from total destruction, by the energy of his conduct, the comprehensiveness of his plans, and the devotion of his private property and credit to the one great and gigantic object.—It is stated by judge Marshall, that "the distresses of the

southern army, like those of the north, were such that it was often difficult to keep them together. That he might relieve them when in the last extremity, and yet not diminish the exertions made to draw support from other sources by creating an opinion that any supplies could be drawn from him, Mr. Morris employed an agent to attend the southern army as a volunteer, whose powers were unknown to general Greene. This agent was instructed to watch its situation, and whenever it appeared impossible for the general to extricate himself from his embarrassments, to furnish him, on his pledging the faith of the government for repayment, with a draft on the financier for such a sum as would relieve the urgency of the moment. Thus was Greene frequently rescued from impending ruin by aids which appeared providential, and for which he could not account."—Now, instead of eulogizing the extraordinary exertions of the financier, which thus enabled him, at the last emergency, to extend his saving arm over almost the whole extent of the country, judge Johnson avers that this conduct, to one who did not merit it, must be acknowledged to be most uncandid and illiberal: it will be presently shown, that whatever his biographer may please to think, general Greene himself entertained a totally different opinion. It is assert-

ed by that writer, that he is at a loss to imagine who this agent could have been, and that the only evidence to support Mr. Marshall, exists in the clearly substantiated fact, that "general Greene was most unmercifully pinched and cramped in the article of cash, by the financier." This mysterious agent was George Abbot Hall, Esq. a gentleman of great worth and honour, and receiver of continental taxes for the state of South Carolina: he was appointed to this responsible and arduous office on the eighteenth of January, 1782. In a letter of the same date, addressed to Mr. Hall, Mr. Morris remarks, touching the wants of the southern army, that "if proper measures are pursued by the southern states, it will then be in my power, as already it is my inclination, to give more effectual relief. For if such laws were passed as would insure the very speedy collection of hard money in taxes, I might consistently with my duty, make immediate expenditures of hard money on contracts, and otherwise, so as greatly to facilitate the payment of those taxes." In the same letter he observes, that "it is possible that such circumstances may turn up as that a little hard money may be of very great use to general Greene. No person, who is not intimately acquainted with my situation, can imagine of how much consequence is every shil-

ling which I part with: but, notwithstanding this is the case, and *that I am precluded from making advances in those states who do not tax*, as I have already mentioned, yet you may, on the contingencies already stated, make such small advances to general Greene as you can spare, and he may stand greatly in need of."—It was impossible that Mr. Morris, by his individual resources, could properly maintain an army in a distant country, when the very states which it was defending from invasion, refused or delayed to pass laws for the collection of the revenue required by congress; nor could he, in conformity with his duty, leave those states destitute, by draining them of their resources, which had already experienced all the privations and desolations of war, and were yet willing to contribute their just quotas for the general defence. But even if positive necessity had overruled these objections, a reason still existed for not fully supplying general Greene with money, which ought certainly to satisfy the most unreasonable;—and that was the impossibility of doing it;—a fact which shall be readily substantiated, when we examine the accusations and animosity against Mr. Morris, which teem throughout the writings of judge Johnson.—He acknowledges that "Mr. Robert Morris has acquired a high reputation in the United States,

for the intelligence and effect with which he conducted their financial affairs;" and after noting the remarkable and rare fact, that "his services were unquestionably great," he qualifies the condescending eulogium by observing that he entered upon the office at a time highly favourable to the acquirement of reputation. The arguments by which this assertion is supported, are extremely curious and logical; his reasons being precisely of that description which are compared to two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff. In the first place, Mr. Johnson syllogistically maintains, in substance, that when the public credit of a country is entirely prostrate, it can fall no further;—that the United States was in that situation;—and that, therefore, it was impossible for the financier not to acquire applause if he effected any thing at all, however inadequate to the public exigencies.—In the second place, he declares, that as the bubble that had occupied the place of property had now burst, it was necessary that a solid medium should find its way into the country from abroad, or out of individual hoards at home, instead of the factitious representative which had recently melted from the hand that held it. But, he continues, the stream would have been slow in filling the vacuum, or must have been laved out as fast as it entered,

had it not been for the actual introduction of a large sum in specie from France, and the substitution of a powerful army and navy from the same quarter, for the swarms of militia, which must have been otherwise employed. In the third place, he remarks, that although the science of banking was in its infancy in America, yet Mr. Morris knew how to avail himself of this great art, of placing capital at the disposal of mercantile intelligence, and its sister art or abuse, of dazzling the public eye by the same piece of coin, multiplied by a thousand reflectors. All these causes are produced to depreciate the merits of Mr. Morris, who, it is said, was appointed to the office of financier at the moment when they began to operate.

Now, the prostrate state of the finances at the commencement of Mr. Morris's administration, so far from lessening the value of his services, is without the least doubt, the very basis on which his fame is founded;—the resuscitation of public credit is the very key-stone of his financial celebrity. But this fact is too apparent, in the course of these pages, to require further observation: it is, indeed, a novel method of reasoning, to depreciate the merits of Mr. Morris in restoring public confidence, because, if he did any thing, he must necessarily have improved it, as it could not be in a worse state. As

to the second cause, the funds procured at that moment, from the French government, might be compared to a drop of water cast into the ocean. The total amount was little more than one million three hundred thousand dollars, of which he received only a small portion; and had the entire grant been placed at his disposal, it would have lasted, according to the annual rate of the expenditures of the United States, at the time he attempted their regulation, not more than a month.—If the "factitious representative," to which Mr. Johnson alludes, is intended to designate continental bills, Mr. Morris was uniformly and strongly opposed to paper emissions; if it means the paper issues of Mr. Morris as financier, they were equitably redeemed to the uttermost farthing; and it is obvious to all those at all acquainted with the necessities and feelings of the time, that no other mode could have been adopted to revive public credit, and to carry on the war. When the paper of congress, of the representatives of united America, was worth nothing, the paper of Robert Morris supplied the deficiency, and saved the country.—The "vacuum" found by him in the public treasury, could not have been lessened by the whole grant of six millions of livres from France, because, when his official duty commenced, the treasury was more than two and an

half millions of dollars in arrears. The slowness with which funds flowed into the treasury, notwithstanding the incessant intreaties and remonstrances of the financier, would have marred all hopes of success in the war, had the shameful neglect on the part of the several states, not been remedied by the private credit, the immense resources, and the gigantic abilities of Mr. Morris. In a letter to general Greene, dated the third of October, 1781, he thus unfolds the state of their finances. "To give you an idea of my situation as to money, I think I need only inform you that since I have been in office, I have received the sum of seven hundred and fifty pounds, Pennsylvania money, from the treasury of this state, and that is in part payment of advances made for them. *This is all I have received from the funds of America.* It is true that colonel Laurens has lately arrived, and brought with him a sum of money from France. (This occurred nearly eight months after his appointment.) And it is also true that I have made use of a very limited credit given me on France, by drawing bills of exchange; but both these resources taken together, are vastly short of what is necessary.—I have lost no occasion of showing to the several states their situation, but hitherto without success, and unless some unforeseen event turns up very speedily, it

is impossible to say what may be the consequences. However, it is our business to hope all things, and that Providence, who has hitherto carried us through our difficulties, will, I trust, continue His protection."—His solicitations to the governors of the states, whose defalcation absolutely rendered it impossible to relieve the necessities of the troops, were unceasing, and the firmness, energy, and even imprudence, which characterized them, when he discovered that simple requests were disregarded, may be gathered from the following circular:

Office of Finance, 16*th May*, 1782.

"Sir,—I have heretofore taken occasion to observe, that the former expenditures of the United States were at a medium rate of twenty millions of dollars, annually, for the support of the war. In the present moment, (while labouring under a large debt,) only eight millions have been asked for. It is evident, therefore, that the sum now required is as little as can possibly answer the purpose. I venture to say that it is not enough. According to the estimates of the year 1782, which were laid before congress by the late board of war, the present establishment of the army would require for pay, exclusive of the half pay, near three millions and an half; for rations, near two millions and a half; for clothing, about twelve hundred thousand; for

forage, above three hundred thousand; for the quartermaster's department (exclusive of articles on hand,) above eight hundred thousand; for military stores (exclusive of articles on hand,) near two hundred thousand, and for the hospitals, (exclusive of medicine, and also of sundry stores on hand,) above one hundred thousand. If, to all these, be added the sum of four hundred thousand for the departments of the pay office, commissary of prisoners, and the various other contingencies, of service, which naturally and necessarily arise, without mentioning the losses which happen in war, here will be an aggregate amount of nine millions; and in this sum nothing is estimated for the interest of our debts, for the marine, and for the civil list, and for the department of foreign affairs. Of the various expenditures, much was to be provided immediately. The heavy article of clothing, for instance, was indispensable. Many things were to be provided early, in order that the army might operate, and the subsistence is to be paid for regularly and constantly. Yet the states have not been asked for any money before the first day of April, and I appeal to them all, whether the supplies of money they have afforded me for the last year, were such as would enable me to provide for the present.

"A three months expenditure was permitted by congress to elapse before the first payment of two millions was asked from the states; but what have they done?—While I write this letter, near two months more are gone forever, and a dishonourable neglect endangers our country. Little local objects have postponed those measures which are essential to our existence, so that the most fatal consequences are now suspended but by a thread. Should they fall on our heads, *this solemn protest shall point to the real cause of our calamities.* I write, sir, to apprise you of the public danger, and to tell you I shall endeavour to fulfil those engagements which I have already made, that I may quit my station like an honest man. But I will make no new engagements; so that the public service must necessarily stand still. What the consequences may be, I know not; but the fault is in the states. They have not complied with the requisitions of congress. They have not enabled me to go on. They have not given me one shilling for the service of the year 1782, excepting only the state of New Jersey, from which I received five thousand five hundred dollars a few days ago; and this is all that has come to my hands out of two millions which were asked for.—Now, sir, should the army disband, and should scenes of distress and horror

be reiterated and accumulated, I again repeat that I am guiltless, for the fault is in the states: they have been deaf to the calls of congress, to the clamours of the public creditors, to the just demands of a suffering army, and even to the reproaches of the enemy, who scoffingly declare that the American army is fed, paid, and clothed, by France. That assertion, so dishonourable to America, was true; but the kindness of France has its bounds, and our army, unfed, unpaid, and unclothed, will have to subsist itself, or disband itself.

"This language may appear extraordinary, but at a future day, when my transactions are laid bare to public view, it will be justified:—this language may not consist with the ideas of dignity which some men entertain; but, sir, dignity is in duty and virtue, not in the sound of swelling expressions. Congress may dismiss their servant, and the states may dismiss congress, but it is by rectitude alone that man can be respectable—I have borne with delays and disappointments as long as I could, and nothing but hard necessity would have wrung from me the sentiments which I have now expressed. I have early declared our situation as far as prudence would permit, and I am now compelled to transgress the bounds of prudence, by being forced to declare,

that unless vigorous exertions are made to put money into the treasury, we must be ruined."

The details which have been afforded relative to the establishment, and indispensable services of the bank of North America, will, no doubt, to a rational mind, be sufficient of themselves to show the invincible necessity which existed at that time, of "dazzling the public eye by the same piece of coin, multiplied by a thousand reflectors." Without an operation of this nature, the office of financier had as well been abolished; but as Mr. Johnson has only afforded a general view of what he considers an abuse, it may be proper to present the details.—Mr. Morris, in order to remove the doubts and hesitations which attended the first emission of his notes, established a kind of private bank, under the care of Mr. John Swanwick. Here were displayed great piles of specie dollars; and all notes presented for payment were at once discharged. Very soon after this prompt payment became known, little demand was comparatively made on Mr. Swanwick's banking establishment: many persons, on their way to exchange notes for specie, returned home without presenting them, on seeing those who had been at the ostensible bank, burthened with dollars. Many others, finding the specie cumbrous, returned, and redemanded their notes, being

satisfied that they could always receive their specie amount.—Now this bank was, in its commencement, supported by loans of specie from all Mr. Morris's friends, who possessed it, in sums, large or small, as each individual could furnish. When the duty of the dollars at the bank had been performed, they were returned to their owners, to be called out again either for show or real service. He contrived the machinery so admirably, that no failure in returning loans ever occurred. The amount of specie used in this fortunate and indispensable operation to fascinate public opinion, was surprisingly small. Thus did he lull the timid, and animate the patriotic, whose wishes exhilarated their confidence. Specie was now frequently carried to the bank, and notes taken for remittances to distant parts of the country. This, with other fortuitous supplies, and the management of the financier and his agents, increased the credit of the notes, and when the first impressions were fixed, few or no difficulties were experienced in their circulation. But while we thus far support what Mr. Johnson considers an offence, it is not intended to point out this occurrence as a primary support to Mr. Morris's credit, which was paramount to such secondary auxiliaries.—It would be an insult to the understanding of the merest tyro in public affairs, to enter into a

formal defence of the conduct of the financier at that important crisis; it is enough merely to state, that the safety of the country depended on the circulation of his notes, and the circulation of his notes depended on public confidence in Mr. Morris, both as a private individual and as an officer. As the former, it was vast and unsullied; as the latter, the defalcation of the government, so fresh in the memory of the people, rendered it expedient to resort to those modes, which are, in a greater or less degree, necessary in all extensive money operations.

To return to Mr. Hall, the secret agent with the southern army; we find that he is at length noticed by judge Johnson, who frequently remarks, that Mr. Morris "actually confided some of his hard guineas to Mr. George Abbot Hall, to be expended mysteriously," and justly presumes that "he held a secret military chest, in miniature, for the use of the army." Mr. Hall, according to his instructions, refused to supply large demands for money, which refusal to general Greene, (who, in fact, finally obtained it,) proves extremely galling to his biographer, who seizes the occasion to distort the language said to have been used by Mr. Morris, that every shilling in the hands of Mr. Hall was to him worth pounds. Judge Johnson presumes that this

great profit was to arise from the purchase of his own notes, or those of his bank, at a depreciated value; while, in fact, it was a mode of expression by which he intimated the connexion which those funds had with the currency of his notes, and the immense value of the funds in the hands of Mr. Hall in carrying his grand financiering system into effect:—if the funds intended to redeem from circulation all notes presented for payment, were permitted to be directed into other channels, the plans and credit of Mr. Morris would have fallen together. If general Greene had known that a certain relief could, in failure of all other resources, have been obtained from Mr. Hall, his exertions must inevitably, and according to every experience of human nature, have relaxed; and this relaxation would have proved as certainly injurious to the country, because it was absolutely impossible, at that time, to furnish sums to any considerable amount.

To advert to the general charge of neglecting to supply Greene's army, it may reasonably be asked in what manner it was to be effected?—Mr. Morris used every exertion to effect that object, and incessantly lamented the dilatory and shameful conduct of the states, which refused to comply with the recommendations of congress for an impost of

five per cent, and delayed all supplies both specific and in money. A few extracts from the letters of the financier to general Greene, will not only portray this matter in its proper light, but also the warm and confidential friendship which existed between the parties. On the tenth of September, 1781, he observes: "While I congratulate you on the many successes which you have obtained under every disadvantage, let me also congratulate you on the just sense of your merit which is now generally diffused. The superintendant of finance, circumstanced as the American superintendant is, must give the fullest applause to an officer who finds in his own genius, an ample resource for the want of men, money, clothes, arms, and supplies. I have made another attempt to place some money in your hands, by requesting the lieutenant-governor and council of South Carolina to pay you, when convenient, five hundred pounds this currency, advanced by order of congress to them, their state being accountable." On the fourteenth of September, 1781, he writes: "In my former letter, I mentioned that his excellency, governor Rutledge, would pay you any money he might receive for subscriptions to the national bank. Herein you will find a bill drawn by the honourable John Mathews, Esq. this date, at ten days sight, on Charles Dray-

ton, Esq. for one hundred and seventy-three specie dollars. Major Burnet will also receive some money and stores for your department, to which I give all the facility in my power. I can with truth, assure you, I have every disposition to provide for those things that are really necessary to the use of the army." On the third of October, 1781, after describing the low state of the treasury, he observes, "your circumstances have long been arduous, but you have hitherto risen so superior to them, that we should be almost as much surprised now, if you were not successful, as we formerly were at your successes. I wish I could contribute to render you more easy. As far as my abilities extend, I shall do it most cheerfully, but they, unfortunately, are very limited. Accept, I pray you, my good wishes, which are almost all I have to give." On the second of November, 1781, he uses the following language: "I hope it is unnecessary to make assurances of my disposition to render your situation both easy and respectable. I am sure it is unnecessary to remark, how inadequate the provisions have been, which the states have hitherto made: at least, it is unnecessary to you. Much less need I display the detail of expenditures which have been requisite for the accomplishment of that happy event which has taken place in

Virginia. I have neither forgotten nor neglected your department. I have done the utmost to provide clothing, arms, accoutrements, medicines, hospital stores, &c. and I flatter myself you will derive, through the different departments, both benefit and relief from my exertions. *I have detained captain Pierce a day, in order to make up, with infinite difficulty, one thousand pounds, Pennsylvania currency, in gold, which he is the bearer of, and which will, I hope, be agreeable and useful.* You have done so much with so little, that my wishes to increase your activity have every possible stimulus. I hope soon to hear that you have gathered fresh laurels, and that you may wear them as long and as happily as they have been speedily and worthily acquired, is the earnest wish of, &c. &c." The words in italics alone, are quoted by judge Johnson, without reference either to the exertions of Mr. Morris through the different departments, nor to his warm wishes in favour of general Greene; and thus distorted, the paragraph is sarcastically represented as "a strong demand upon the gratitude of him who received it." It is necessary to state, with respect to the cash advanced by Mr. Morris, and the smallness of the amounts, that he explicitly advised general Greene, that he would endeavour, from time to time, to put him in possession of such sums of hard

money as might be necessary for services which could not otherwise be performed; but that even those supplies would, from necessity, be very moderate.

In the month of December, 1781, Mr. Morris communicated a plan to the respective governors of North and South Carolina, and Georgia, for the relief of the southern army. The distresses which those states had lately experienced, prevented the collection of their quotas in hard money, but they were able to furnish certain articles for the subsistence of the troops. The financier was extremely solicitous to procure the supplies by contract, but he had no specie for the purpose, nor were taxes imposed in the southern states for procuring it: he was, therefore, compelled to wait until the treasury should be replenished, the hard money in America become somewhat diffused, and a prospect should arise of receiving back from those states in hard money, their quota of the public taxes. He, therefore, devised and proposed a plan to appoint a receiver of taxes in each state, agreeably to the act of congress, and to empower such receiver to issue notes on the warrants of general Greene, payable in the taxes, or from the amount of them when collected. By this means, those articles necessary for the consumption of the army might have been pur-

chased, and the quota of the state been thereby paid. But the preliminary passage of a tax-bill, which was required, was a fatal obstacle to the efforts of Mr. Morris. In a letter to general Greene, dated the nineteenth of December, 1781, relative to contracts, he observes that he "would now offer contracts for your army, but the dubious state of the southern country, the want of men who have sufficient capital, and sufficient knowledge of their resources, even if I should offer, and, above all, my serious doubts whether any exertions would be made if once I stepped in to their relief;—these are reasons which oblige me to leave you for the present, as you are."—In January, 1782, he ordered the continental brig Active, to Georgetown, South Carolina, and directed the balance in the hands of Mr. Hall, after the sale of the cargo, and relading of the vessel, to be held subject to the order of general Greene.—As to the remarks of Johnson, relative to partial payments to the army, in certain cases, the financier was prohibited from making them, by a resolution of congress, passed on the fourteenth of December, 1781.—On the twenty-fourth of April, 1782, Mr. Morris informs general Greene that the several bills which he found it necessary to draw, had been punctually honoured. "I am pleased," he continues, "at having been

able by this means to strengthen your credit, and provide you with money, which I dare say, agreeable to your declarations, will be expended only on occasions of pressing necessity. Would it were in my power to make you perfectly easy on the score of money; you would then experience the alacrity with which my compliances would be made." A considerable portion of this letter is also quoted by judge Johnson, but the above paragraph, showing his acceptance of the bills, and his eagerness to relieve general Greene, is omitted.

In his letter of the tenth of June, 1782, Mr. Morris forcibly describes the situation to which he is reduced;—a situation, struggling as he was in favour of his country against almost incredible difficulties, which entitles him to the warmest gratitude of the existing generation, and ought to have silenced the tongue of slander itself. "I can easily suppose that they (the army) are in want of money, because, I well know that none has been sent for a long time past; but I did hope and expect that you would have had a sufficiency of clothing; and knowing, as I do, the expenditures which have been made for that purpose, I was both surprised and hurt to find your distresses so great, when I had flattered myself that they had, in this respect, been totally relieved.—Your situation in that ex-

hausted country, and the impossibility of sending you any aid from hence, while our coasts are infested so much by the enemy, will naturally account for those distresses which have arisen from the want or badness of food. I cannot conceive that even money would afford you any considerable relief, were it in my power to send you any, which it is not. I have long since taken measures to obtain salt, but whether they will be effectual, God only knows. With respect to pay, I have laid down a rule, which I am determined not to break through: it is, never to be guilty of partial payments, on any account whatever. You may, therefore, rely that your army shall, in this respect, fare equally with the rest of our officers and soldiers. If the states will furnish me with money, most cheerfully will I dispense it to all who are entitled to receive it: but, until they do, I must continue to be as I am, exposed to clamour from every quarter. I have hopes, but I have so often been disappointed, that I dare not cherish those hopes myself, nor convey them to, or encourage them in, you. It is with the greatest truth I assure you that I am driven to the greatest shifts to find the smallest sums for the commonest purposes. Rely on it, my dear sir, that I have hitherto, and shall continue to give you, all the support which my means will possibly admit of."

On the eighteenth of June, 1782, in a communication to a committee of congress, detailing the causes which prevented the supply of the southern army on contract, and which general Greene had been authorised to effect, if practicable, in December, 1781, the financier remarks that he had already done every thing that his means would permit, to supply that army; and that, if he could command money, he would take care that they should be furnished with every thing necessary. It may be observed, in exemplification of the expense and difficulty of procuring those supplies, that the cost of transporting flour alone, was estimated at sixty pounds, Pennsylvania currency, per ton.—With respect to the bills drawn in 1783, by general Greene on Mr. Morris, the latter observes, in a letter of the sixteenth of May, " Before I close this letter, I must again repeat my solicitude on the score of your bills, which are coming in upon me so fast that the means of paying them must, I fear, be deficient;" and on the next day he advises him that it had been necessary to pay his draft for five hundred dollars out of his private fortune. The bills, however, at length so far exceeded the expectations of Mr. Morris, that he was unable to provide funds, and was consequently compelled, in August, 1783, to postpone their payment.

But it is unnecessary to expatiate further on this subject. The extracts which have, and a multitude of others which might have, been afforded, both in relation to the indefatigable exertions of Mr. Morris, and to the strict confidence which subsisted between him and general Greene, conclusively show, that no accusations of want of attention to the southern army, or of "uncandid and illiberal conduct" towards that officer, can be substantiated against the financier. But, fortunately, we possess evidence of a more positive nature, which nothing can controvert. The venerable judge Peters, who was in the department of war, at the time of Mr. Hall's appointment, makes the following remarks: "I never knew, nor heard, of any complaints on the subject, although we were in correspondence with general Greene, and the officers in the staff-departments of his separate command. Wants, difficulties, and complaints, too well founded, and generally remediless, were innumerable; but among them, any charge against Mr. Morris never came to our knowledge. I think this is a strong negative proof of the non-existence of any reasonable charge against Mr. Morris, who had as many difficulties to encounter in pecuniary affairs, as had the worthy general in his military command."—The right reverend bishop White asked Mr. Morris, a few days before

his death, the name of the secret agent who supplied general Greene with funds. He replied that it was Mr. Hall, a man of honour and integrity, whom he had employed for that purpose; and that when Greene came to Philadelphia to arrange his accounts, the whole affair was disclosed. The general was at first startled at the circumstance, and felt considerably hurt at having been deemed unworthy of confidence. Mr. Morris, with some observations on the reasons which caused him to adopt the measure, desired general Greene to consider the matter with attention: this advice was followed, and he then declared that Mr. Morris *had acted perfectly right.*

Having thus effectually refuted the points which more particularly affected the financial reputation of Mr. Morris, we have not space to dwell on the groundless charges relative to his partiality "in the distribution of his solid favours," nor on the allusions to "Morris's supposed redundant treasury;" "Morris's hoarded treasures," &c. &c. and we feel the less concern at our inability, because we know that every man of proper feeling will require no index to the causes which have originated these illiberal sarcasms. We cannot dismiss the subject, however, without making the following extract from general Greene's letter to Gouverneur Morris,

declining the office of secretary at war, in 1783. "I have the highest opinion of Mr. Morris, minister of finance; and had I the least inclination to enter the department you propose, a connexion with him would be a strong motive. My acquaintance with him is small; I venerate his character; and the more so, for his engaging in so difficult an office under such unfavourable appearances." Nor can we omit the fine eulogium of Mr. Morris, conveyed in his letter of the twentieth of January, 1783: "I most sincerely and heartily congratulate you on the full recovery of the southern states. Your conduct throughout the whole of your command has been such, that my applause can add no lustre to it: your enemies will be obliged to acknowledge the superiority which you have so often compelled them to feel, and your grateful country must feel more than she can acknowledge."

The campaign of 1781, which proved decisive of the long and doubtful contest, encircled the name of Robert Morris with living laurels which shall forever flourish. In the capture of Cornwallis, the energy, perseverance, and financial talents, of that great man, united with the wisdom and bravery of Washington, in deciding the fate of the union. The plan of the campaign of 1781, as agreed upon by the commander-in-chief and the French authorities,

was to aim at the reduction of New York, the strong hold of the British; in this attack, the French army, under count Rochambeau, and the French fleets, under De Barras and De Grasse, were to co-operate. At that time, the American army lay at Phillipsburg on York island, waiting for the fleet under De Grasse, then momentarily expected from the West Indies. The *southern enterprise* was never contemplated, until unexpectedly, and to his extreme surprise, general Washington was compelled to change the whole plan of operations, because the French admiral, on his arrival, broke his engagements to come into the bay of New York, and announced his intention, through the admiral commanding the squadron at Rhode Island, to enter, and remain, *for a few weeks*, in the Chesapeake. A claim to great merit has been made by, or on behalf of, count Rochambeau, who commanded the French auxiliary troops, with regard to this change of measures, under the idea that he had planned the southern enterprise against lord Cornwallis, a long time before it occurred; and it appears that a pamphlet to this effect, was published in France. No fact can be more certain than that any claim for merit on these grounds, was wholly gratuitous: the plan of the campaign had been most solemnly agreed to be the capture of New York, by our main army,

assisted by the French troops, commanded by the count, who had joined it at a convenient position for carrying into execution *that*, and *no other plan:* count De Grasse was destined to co-operate in this plan, (*and no other*,) and was, at a fixed period, to be in such a position before New York as to afford his indispensable assistance. There is no doubt that general Rochambeau had his share in devising this scheme; and he is entitled to as much merit, in forming it, as any one may choose to bestow. A military character who had rendered such important services to our country as were, by universal consent, attributed to him, needed no borrowed plume; nor is it our remotest wish to detract from the glorious participation of our allies in the capture of Cornwallis; but we do distinctly aver, from unquestionable authority, that all the arrangements connected with, and consequent on, the unexpected change, were made wholly by general Washington. Count Rochambeau acknowledged that he advised De Grasse not to venture into New York bay: had he acted consistently with his duty, he ought with candour, and in due season, to have made this communication to the commander-in-chief; whereas, the first intimation of a change of the original plan, was contained in the French admiral's letter from Rhode Island. Assuredly, at

this period, the expedition to the southward had never been thought of; but as Rochambeau's countervailing advice had been attended with successful consequences, advantage was adroitly taken of this good fortune, and an otherwise unjustifiable interference, was transformed into personal merit.

By a resolution of congress, of the thirty-first of July, 1781, the honourable Richard Peters was directed, as a member of the board of war, to repair to head-quarters, with Mr. Morris, the superintendant of finance, in order to consult with the commander-in-chief on the subject of the arrangement and numbers of the army;—the main object being to establish the mode, and quantity of supplies required for the operations of the campaign, which was known to them, to be directed to the capture of New York. They fortunately arrived in camp a short time previous to the receipt of the French admiral's letter; and, therefore, a living witness in the person of the venerable judge Peters, who was present, and became acquainted with the real state of things when the change of measures took place, and whose mission to head-quarters demanded his perfect knowledge of every occurrence, can attest the fidelity of this narrative.—Mr. Morris and Mr. Peters immediately proceeded to camp, and arrived at head-quarters in the early part of

August, where they had repeated conferences with the commander-in-chief, on the subject of their mission, to which only a few confidential officers were admitted. The proposed attack on New York was almost the exclusive subject of discussion; and the expectation of the arrival of the French fleet in the bay, was a frequent theme of discourse. No doubt, whatever, existed as to the consummation of this event, on which the most perfect reliance was placed: but the apprehension expressed by count de Grasse, of danger to his heavy ships, should they enter the New York bay, and the avowal of his intention to sail for the Chesapeake, put at once an end to deliberation on the subject. This breach of a positive engagement, produced an agitation in the high-minded and honourable American chief, which those who witnessed it, "can never forget."—One morning, at the beating of the *reveillé*, Mr. Morris and Mr. Peters were aroused from their slumbers by a message from head-quarters, requesting their immediate attendance. Somewhat surprised at the circumstance, they complied without delay, and found general Washington violently exclaiming against the breach of faith on the part of the French admiral, who had changed his destination, and advised him that he would proceed to Chesapeake bay, where he would co-operate in any plan formed

for an enterprise in that quarter. After receiving this unwelcome communication, the commissioners returned to their tent, musing on the past scene, and lamenting the total subversion of the plan which they had been empowered to support. At the usual hour of breakfast, they returned to head-quarters, and found the general as calmly engaged in making out his notes of the supplies he should require, as if nothing extraordinary had happened: from the powerful resources of his mind, he had already planned, in a sudden and masterly manner, the course of his future operations. His first question was, "Well, what can you do for me *under this unexpected disappointment?*"—Mr. Peters replied, "Every thing with *money*—without it nothing,"—and looked anxiously towards the financier. "I understand you," said Mr. Morris, "but I must know the amount you require."—Before the hour of dinner, Mr. Peters, having examined the returns of the commander-in-chief, communicated the result. Mr. Morris, with his usual candour, informed the general that he had not any means whatever of furnishing the amount in money, but would be compelled to rely *solely on his credit;* and that the commander-in-chief could decide whether he considered it prudent to depend upon that credit, the efficacy of which, it would be necessary for him to

risk. Washington instantly observed,—"The measure is inevitable; and, therefore, resolved on; and I must pursue it at all hazards."—The expedition against Cornwallis having thus been determined on, Mr. Morris and Mr. Peters set out for Philadelphia, under an escort, through the shortest and most dangerous route. They were strictly enjoined by general Washington, to keep the whole affair a profound secret; and so faithfully was this injunction observed, that the first intelligence received by congress of the movement of the army, was derived from the march of the troops through Philadelphia, on the third of September.

The necessary supplies of every thing required for this important and decisive enterprise, were chiefly furnished by means of Mr. Morris's credit, to an immense amount, and Mr. Peters superintended their provision and preparation. From seventy to eighty pieces of battering cannon, and one hundred of field artillery, were completely fitted and furnished, with attirail and ammunition, although, on the return of the committee to Philadelphia, there was not a field-carriage put together, and but a small quantity of fixed ammunition in the magazines: the train was progressively sent on in three or four weeks, to the great honour of the officers and men employed in that meritorious ser-

vice. *All this, together with the expense of provision for, and pay of the troops, was accomplished on the personal credit of Robert Morris, who issued his notes to the amount of* ONE MILLION FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS, *which were finally all paid.* Assistance was afforded by Virginia and other states, from the merit of which we mean not to detract; but, as there was no money in the chest of the war office, and the treasury of the United States was empty, the expedition never could have been operative and brought to a successful issue, had not, most fortunately, Mr. Morris's credit, superior exertions, and management, supplied the indispensable sinews of war,—the funds necessary to give effect to exertion.*

In addition to the immense exertions of the financier to effect this movement, general Washington obtained a loan of specie from the count De Rochambeau. Mr. Morris managed this important negociation, and made the proposition to the French minister, Luzerne, who refused his assent in the most positive manner. But his persuasive talents, joined to the evident fact that the army would, without funds, be unable to move, and the opportune news of the arrival of De Grasse in the Chesapeake, finally prevailed.

* Narrative of the Hon. Judge Peters.

This important change of measures evinces that accident more than design, often produces the most momentous incidents, as well in the affairs of nations as of individuals; and we must look with greater admiration on the facility with which Washington so promptly accommodated his measures to this sudden change of circumstances, than if they had been taken on the most mature consideration. It was, in fact, a most fortunate change;—for we have strong reasons to believe, that if the intended attempt on New York had been made, it would not have succeeded.

The situation in which Mr. Morris found himself placed at this period, would have appalled a less resolute and comprehensive mind. It was not official duty which prompted his determination to support, at every hazard, the views of general Washington, because, with an empty treasury, and a vast load of debt, nothing could be reasonably demanded from him, in that character. He acted as a patriot who had devoted himself to his country, and resolved, as a private individual, to effect an object upon which the liberties of that country depended, and which baffled the resources of United America. In the prosecution of this gigantic labour, he surmounted every obstacle which impeded his progress, with a celerity and perseverance, as astonishing as they

were successful. But his struggles were violent, and, at seasons, almost hopeless. "A very heavy demand," he says to general Schuyler, "was made upon me for the rapid movement: this demand was as urgent as it was great, and I was unable alike to resist or to answer it. By the greatest exertions, I have at length been able to comply with the general's views, but that compliance has exposed me almost pennyless, to answer engagements which cannot be violated." "I must struggle through these difficulties," he remarks, in a letter to Washington; "but the doing so requires that attention and time which ought to be bestowed on greater objects." Even the supplies of cattle for the main army, when purchased, were arrested on the road from want of funds to procure pasturage! The droves being placed in this situation in New Jersey, Mr. Morris thus addressed the governor of that state, relative to the means of moving them: "I know but two modes in which the object can be accomplished. The one is by the payment of money to the commissary for the purpose: but this, I fear, will not be in your power; I, therefore, only mention it as preferable to all others, if practicable. The other mode is, by granting warrants to impress pasturage." On the twentieth of September, 1781, he makes the ensuing observations to the president of

Pennsylvania, which serve to convey some idea of the invaluable services, and disinterested sacrifices of Robert Morris: "The late movements of the army have so entirely drained me of money, that I have been obliged to pledge my personal credit very deeply, in a variety of instances, besides borrowing money from my friends, and advancing, to promote the public service, *every shilling of my own.*" In a communication to the minister of France, soliciting further aid from his government, the financier justly remarks, that "the important operations now carrying on by his excellency general Washington, depend so materially on the performance of my engagements, that the most fatal consequences may ensue from any breach of them."—It may, indeed, truly be said, that the success of the American arms depended wholly on Robert Morris, not as an officer of the American states, but as a private American citizen.—But, notwithstanding the importance of the crisis and the urgency of his appeals, the states continued to pursue their shameful system of negligence and delay, until their tardy proceedings, at a moment when activity and energy were absolutely indispensable, aroused even the placid temper of Mr. Morris, schooled and regulated as it was, amid the cares and disappointments of his office, and the murmurs and slanders of the

public creditors. In the pithy sentences contained in the following letter to the commissary-general of purchases,* we readily recognize the state of his feelings at that period: "I am very glad that you push hard upon the states for supplies. It is, I find, necessary that you and I should understand each other on the subject. The general will, I dare say, take care to have as few unnecessary mouths as possible. But after all, a certain quantity of provisions is indispensably necessary. Now this quantity must be furnished by the states of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware. If you rely on my exertions, you will probably be disappointed. Should the operations against Cornwallis fail for want of supplies, the states must thank their own negligence. So inform them. If they will not exert themselves on the present occasion, they never will. As to all which can be said about the failure of the one, or of another, kind of money, it is left to themselves. Let them tax in money which will not fail. It is their business to provide supplies, and money too. If they neglect or omit, this necessary duty, I again repeat that they must answer for the consequences. I shall be glad, at all times, to hear from you very particularly, with all such information as you shall

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think necessary. But do not lean too hard upon me. Do not expect too much help from me. You will be deceived and disappointed, if so. Urge the states, therefore. Urge Delaware in particular. When I do furnish any thing, it must be money. Let some of your people, therefore, apply when you intend applications. I cannot run about the city to purchase articles. That is the duty of an assistant commissary: and my time is too much, and I hope, too well employed to permit it."

It will be scarcely credited by the present generation, that at the very moment when Mr. Morris was almost overwhelmed by these great and manifold necessities, he was censured for not relieving the civil and military officers of Charleston, who, by the order of lord Cornwallis, had been transported as prisoners, to St. Augustine. But the indignation which ought to swell the bosom of every honest American, on reading this record of ingratitude, never disturbed the equanimity of the sufferer, who thus calmly notices the reproach in a letter to general Greene: "The manner in which antipathies have been imbibed and propagated with respect to my department, is a little history of human weakness, and I might say wickedness. One sample will show the texture of the whole piece. While I was in advance, not only my credit, but

every shilling of my own money, and all which I could obtain from my friends, to support the important expedition against Yorktown, much offence was taken that I did not minister relief to the officers taken prisoners at Charleston. I felt their distresses as sincerely as any man could do, but it was impossible to afford relief."—But his resolution to devote all his resources to the attainment of that great object, which might, by one decisive blow, secure the independence of the country, was paramount to all secondary considerations.

> "Justum et tenacem propositi virum,
> Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
> Non vultus instantis tyranni,
> Mente quatit solidâ."

From the results which attended the official labours of Mr. Morris, it is fully established, that the objects of internal administration, though less brilliant and glorious, are the first source, and the firmest foundation, of warlike exploits. Having brought, by means of the bank of North America, the capitals and credit of the stockholders to the support of public credit, the financier resolved to operate the same effect in his own name, and with his private credit. He accordingly threw into circulation, no small sum of obligations signed by himself, and payable at different terms, out of foreign subsidies, or even out of the revenues of the

United States.* And although, in the course of time, these obligations had amounted to upwards of five hundred and eighty-one thousand dollars, they never depreciated, excepting a little towards the end of the war;—so great was the confidence of the public in the good faith and punctuality of the financier. Thus, at the very epoch in which the credit of the government was almost entirely annihilated, and its bills nearly without value, that of a single individual was stable and universal. It is impossible to overrate the advantages which resulted to the state from possessing, in these obligations of the financier, the means of anticipating the produce of taxes, at a time when such anticipations were not only necessary but indispensable. By this aid, it was enabled to provide for the wants of the army, no longer by way of requisition, but by regular contracts. This new mode had the most happy effects; it produced economy in purchases, exactness in supplies, and a cordial satisfaction among the people, who had always manifested an extreme disgust at the compulsory requisitions. It cannot be advanced that this anticipated employment of the produce of taxes, is an example to be imitated; nor even can it be denied, on the contrary, that it

* These notes circulated as cash amongst the merchants and shopkeepers.

has dangers. But Robert Morris possessed the faculty of using this resource with so much discretion, and of introducing so admirable an order and economy into all parts of the public expenditure, that no manner of inconvenience resulted from it. But a foundation was necessary to all these new dispositions of the treasurer; and this foundation consisted in taxes. Congress, therefore, on the thirtieth of October, 1781, decreed that the states should be required to furnish the treasury, by way of assessment, with the sum of eight millions of dollars, and at the same time determined what should be, in this sum, the contingent of each state.*

But the remedy thus applied to the penury of the treasury, proved inefficacious, slow, and uncertain. The compliances of the states with the requisitions of congress, were generally tardy, and often shamefully deficient. Public credit was now at an end, and no means were afforded adequate to the public expense. Various expedients had been resorted to, and with considerable success, during the course of the year 1781; but it is of the nature of expedients to increase the evils which they postpone, and the autumn of that year found America in the situation of that part of the federal army

* Botta's War of Independence. Vol. iii.

which then returned through Philadelphia, from the capture of Yorktown,—crowned with laurels, but distressed by want. Hence the necessity of a full and regular supply of funds from the several states, upon which to found the operations of the financier. But, although the personal influence of the commander-in-chief was called in to aid the civil authority, in stimulating them to exertion, and the circular letters of Washington and Morris urged every argument which the situation of America could suggest, to procure a faithful compliance with the votes of congress, the states continued to pursue the same dilatory system which had already created so much vexation and embarrassment, and the several legislatures declared the inability of their constituents to pay taxes. Many were devising means to extract money from, instead of replenishing, the continental treasury; and some, although it enacted laws for imposing taxes, directed the demands of the state to be previously satisfied, and the residue only to be paid into the general treasury.

This universal supineness, and want of activity, as well in the local constituted authorities as in the mass of the people, were the great obstacles which impeded the financial plans of Mr. Morris. As the credit of congress no longer existed, there was no other source from which the necessary funds could

be obtained, or the immense engagements in which he had unavoidably entered, be liquidated. Hence the urgency with which he represented the necessity of complying, without delay, with the several requisitions, made, from time to time, by the general congress. No means were spared to enforce the magnitude of the object;—eulogiums and censures, entreaties, and even threats were resorted to, and for a long and dangerous period, without effect. During the whole course of his administration, the financier was incessantly employed in striving to arouse the fears, the energy, or the pride of the several state governments. At the same time, he was exceedingly distressed by the demands of the public creditors, who looked up to him as the only source from which they could obtain payment; but he uniformly and candidly declared to every claimant, that while he was determined to show no preferences whatever, they should have justice to the full extent of the means placed in his power by the states,—that he would never deceive them,—and that, while the wealth of the people continued in the hands of the several legislatures, redress could be expected from them, and from them only. "I hope," he remarked, "that a sense of justice and honour, with a patriotic regard for those rights which we have long laboured to establish, will prompt

every state in the union to make those liberal efforts which are necessary to produce public confidence and public freedom."

The dilatoriness of the states was greatly increased by a pernicious idea prevalent among many of them, that their accounts with the continent were not to be adjusted. This sentiment necessarily spread a languor over all their operations; although to suppose that an expensive war could be carried on without their joint and vigorous efforts, was beneath the wisdom of those who were called to the high offices of legislation. The moment that the opinion was admitted, that those states which did the least, and charged the most, would derive the greatest benefit, a shameless inactivity took the place of that noble emulation which ought to have pervaded and animated the whole union. Mr. Morris, feeling the importance of removing the dangerous sentiments thus raised by self-interest, disaffection, or error, immediately declared to the several governors, that all the accounts of the states with the United States should be speedily liquidated if he could possibly effect it, and that his efforts for that purpose should be unceasing. "I make this assurance," he said, "in the most solemn manner, and I entreat that the consequences of a contrary assertion may be most seriously weighed

and considered, before it is made or believed." "It is by being just to individuals," he remarks, in the same letter,* "to each other, to the union, to all;—by generous grants of solid revenue,—and by adopting energetic methods to collect that revenue;—and not by complainings, vauntings, or recriminations, that these states must expect to establish their independence, and rise into power, consequence, and grandeur."

In a circular letter addressed to the governors of the several states, dated the twenty-seventh of July, 1781, Mr. Morris makes the following excellent remarks: "Despotic governments are, in war, superior to others, by the union of efforts, the secrecy of operations, and the rapidity with which every wheel may be moved by one sovereign will. This superiority, however, is amply compensated to free governments by the ardent attachment of their citizens, and the general confidence which enables them to make exertions beyond their force, and expend in one year, the revenues of many. A single view of our enemy, in the unequal contest she now carries on, will demonstrate these advantages more clearly than any arguments. The credit of Great Britain is not only her chief, but it is almost her only, support. Inferior, in every thing

* Twenty-fifth of July, 1781.

else, to the associates combined against her, she still makes head every where, and balances the opposition through the four quarters of the globe. While we feel the force of these last strugglings of her ambition, we must admire the source from whence they flow. Admiring, we should endeavour to imitate, and in order to succeed, we need only make the attempt. There was a time when public confidence was higher in America than in any other country. Hence the existence of that paper which bore us through the conflict of five years hostility. In the moment when none others dared to oppose Great Britain in her career towards universal empire, we met her ambition with our fortitude, encountered her tyranny with our virtue, and opposed her credit with our own. We may perceive what our credit would have done, had it been supported by revenue, from what it has already effected without that support: and we have no reason to doubt but that it may be restored, when we reflect on the fate which paper-currencies have formerly sustained."

To augment the difficulties experienced by the financier, the several states had persuaded themselves into the belief that their exertions were unequal, and each maintained the superiority of its own efforts. Each one claimed the merit of having

done more than others, and each continued desirous of relaxing to an equality with the supposed deficiencies of its neighbours. Hence it followed, that they daily became more and more negligent, and a dangerous supineness pervaded the whole continent. Recommendations which, in the year 1775, would have roused all America to action, were suffered, in 1781, to lie neglected. Such was the inevitable consequence of this opinion: the settlement of former accounts being considered as a thing forgotten, men naturally reasoned from them to those which were then present,—concluded that they would also drop into forgetfulness, and considered every thing not furnished, as so much saved. The legislatures would not call forth the resources of their respective constituents; the public operations languished; the necessity of purchasing on credit enhanced the expense; the want of that credit compelled the use of force; the use of that force created offence; and the country was daily plunged more deeply in debt, and its revenue was more deeply anticipated. In reference to this subject, Mr. Morris remarks, that "a situation so dangerous calls for more accurate principles of administration, and these cannot be too speedily adopted. The settlement of accounts is the first step; but it is necessary not only that this settlement be speedy, but also that it

be final; for, if it be not final, the disputes on that subject will have the same baleful influence with those now subsisting. Disunion among the states must follow in the event. Disgust must take place in the moment. The same opprobrious indolence will continue;—and, in the meantime, it is to little purpose that our country abounds in men and subsistence, if they cannot be called forth for her defence."—The conduct of the states appears the more extraordinary, as the whole amount of requisitions from the beginning of the war to the first of March, 1780, was but little more than five millions of dollars: and yet this demand, moderate as it appears, was not complied with.

In this disastrous situation of public affairs, Mr. Morris strongly recommended to congress, the imposition, in addition to the five per cent. already called for on articles imported, and on prizes and prize goods, of a land tax, a poll tax, and an excise on spirituous liquors, to be appropriated to the payment of the public debts. He admitted that neither of those taxes would be strictly equal between the states, but maintained that no other tax would be so, and that, taken together, they would be as nearly equal as the fluctuating nature of human affairs would permit. He proposed that the land tax should be laid at a certain rate by the acre, because the

superior certainty of such a tax would give it the preference to others, although it could not probably be so great as might have been expected. In fact, his efforts to obtain supplies upon the various requisitions made by congress, to operate a settlement of past accounts, and to procure proper funds for the public debts, were unceasing. By an act of the twenty-eight of June, 1781, he was directed to press a compliance with those requisitions, and on the sixth of July he wrote a circular letter to the several state-governors, in a strain of dignity and remonstrance, and excited patriotism which has seldom been excelled.

The demands of congress were two-fold;—some for specific supplies of the produce of the several states,—the others for money. Previous to the appointment of Mr. Morris, the manner of doing public business had been such, that it was not merely difficult, but absolutely impracticable, to state any accounts in the clear and satisfactory manner which ought always to be desired in private life, but which, in public life, is of the last importance. This evil, however, resulted more from the want of arrangement, than the fault of any particular men; but the perplexities and labours in which it involved the financier, were not the less great and vexatious. Moreover, the worst effects arose from

demanding generally a contribution of specified articles; and Mr. Morris soon found, by experience, that they were not to be relied on. In demanding these supplies from the states, he requested information as to the revenue laws which had been passed, the mode of collecting taxes, the monies in their treasuries, the various appropriations of it, and the different paper currencies in the several states, for the purpose of obtaining proper materials on which to found his future expectations, and to form efficacious systems of revenue and expenditure. But Mr. Morris experienced the mortification of not receiving any accurate or satisfactory answers to these questions;—a strong proof of the relaxed habit of administration in this country at that period.

The low state of public credit, from the want of solid funds to support it, had induced the United States in congress, to call for an impost of five per cent. on all goods imported, and on all prizes and prize goods, to be granted for the payment of the principal and interest of the debts contracted, or which might be contracted during the war. Some of the states complied with this demand. The two most southern states were in such disorder that a compliance from them could not be reasonably expected, nor was it relied on; but Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Delaware, Maryland,

and North Carolina, delayed passing the necessary laws. On the seventh of July, 1781, an energetic appeal from the financier, procured the compliance of the states of New York, Delaware, and North Carolina, and the accession of the others was confidently anticipated: this was of the last importance, as the impost could not be carried into effect without the concurrence of every state in the union. Thus, instead of realizing funds from this source, the financier was compelled patiently to await the event. In the month of July, 1781, notwithstanding the pressing instances of Mr. Morris, very little hard money had been obtained from the states on the past requisitions of congress, and not more than one hundred thousand dollars during his whole administration. Some considerable specific supplies had, indeed, been drawn forth, and a large amount of paper money remained in his hands: from the former, the army had been principally maintained; but the paper money was of no possible use, although, from motives of policy, it was necessary to receive it in payment of taxes. The confidence of the people was so entirely lost, that no bills of credit whatever could, at that moment, have been made use of as money. "If I could buy any thing with it," Mr. Morris remarks, "I would not, until the last necessity; but it will buy nothing, so that it

must be burnt as soon as it honestly can." In communicating this lamentable state of public affairs to Dr. Franklin, Mr. Morris makes the following observations: "The picture I have already given of this country will not be pleasing to you. Truth bids me add, that it will admit of a higher colouring. But what else could be expected from us? A revolution—a war. The dissolution of government—the creating of it anew. Cruelty, rapine, and devastation in the midst of our very bowels. These, sir, are circumstances by no means favourable to finance. The wonder, then, is, that we have done so much, that we have borne so much, and, the candid will add, that we have dared so much."

In the beginning of the year 1782, Mr. Morris appears to have felt more severely than at any other period, the weight of the burden which rested upon him, and beneath which he, for a moment, tottered. The states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Maryland, had not yet passed laws for the impost of five per cent.; and Virginia had lately suspended the operation of the act which they had enacted in relation to it. The public debt being unfunded and unprovided for, the interest could not be paid, and those who confided in the government in the hour of distress, were defrauded. To expect that, under such circumstances, others would

confide in that government would have been folly; and to expect that foreigners would trust a government which had no credit with its own citizens, would have been madness. The whole weight, therefore, of the war was necessarily borne in the present moment; and even the slightest anticipations of revenue were made on the personal credit of the financier. "I have laboured," Mr. Morris eloquently remarked, "to establish a credit for my country, that when the period should arrive, (and I hoped it was not far distant,) in which I would lay down the burthen now pressing upon me, my successor in office should have no other difficulties to struggle with, than those which necessarily attend an extensive and complicated administration. It is, therefore, with no common degree of anxiety and distress, that I see my wishes frustrated. I feel as an American for my country,—as a public servant, for the interest and honour of those whom I serve,—and as a man, that I cannot enjoy the ease and tranquillity I have sought for, through a life of continual care and unremitted labour. It is my duty to mention to you (*congress*) the fact, and to apprise you that, in such circumstances, our operations will continue to be the desultory efforts of individual power, rather than the combined exertion of political strength and firmness."

At this juncture, too, the repeated assurances almost daily received from the ministers of his most christian majesty, of their steady determination to grant no further pecuniary aid, left no room to doubt of their intentions. This determination was a severe disappointment to Mr. Morris, who had formed not only hopes, but even expectations from that quarter. He believed that, when the brilliant successes of the last campaign should be known, and when it should also be known how much the United States were able to perform, and how necessary an aid of money was to call their power into action, the king of France would again have extended that relief which would be the most beneficial to the common cause. Hopes of pecuniary aid from any other quarter were all a delusion. It was in vain that expensive establishments were kept up to solicit succour from Spain, which appeared neither able nor willing to afford it;—from Holland, which was seeking a peace, and not to increase the causes of war;—or from Russia, which seemed more inclined to crush than to support our cause. "Let us apply to borrow," said the financier, "wherever we may, our mouths will always be stopped by the one word—*security*. The states will not give revenue for the purpose, and the United States have nothing to give but a general national pro-

mise, of which their enemies loudly charge them with the violation."

Goaded by the clamours of the public creditors, and uniformly disappointed by the inattention of the state authorities to his most pressing entreaties, Mr. Morris at length assumed a style in his communications, at once monitory, dignified, and solemn. On the first of September, 1781, he thus endeavours to awaken the fears of the governor of Delaware: "I have pressed upon you as urgently as I could, the necessity of a compliance with the requisitions: the moment is now arrived when that compliance must be insisted on. If the legislature have neglected to pass the proper laws, or if there has been any neglect in the execution of those they have passed, the persons who are in fault must be responsible for the consequences to their suffering fellow citizens. It is needless to say, that a body of soldiers will not starve in the midst of a plentiful country. I hope most ardently that your timely endeavours will have spared the necessity of military collection. If not, I still hope that the military force will be exerted with all possible mildness: but at any rate, the public service must not suffer." To the governor of Massachusetts, he uses the following energetic language: "To reiterate arguments on the subject will be unnecessary. It is a

plain matter, parallel to the observation of every man, and must be determined on the simple question, shall the faith of the United States be supported? You, sir, who know the value of credit and the duty of supporting it,—you, who feel the force of those moral obligations on which that duty is founded,—you, I hope, will enforce my applications, or rather the applications of our sovereign, by that energy which accompanies the voice of the supreme executive, when standing on the ground of information, and speaking the language of reason and truth." In concluding a circular letter to the governors of the several states, dated the nineteenth of October, 1781, he makes the following feeling and eloquent remarks: "By the bounty of the Almighty, we are placed in a situation where our future fate depends upon our present conduct. We may be happy or miserable, as we please. If we do our duty now, this war will soon be brought to a close. If not, it may last for many years, and what will then be its termination, it is not in human wisdom to foresee. Thoroughly convinced that the enemy must ask peace, when we are in a condition vigorously to prosecute the war, and that we shall be in that condition whenever our affairs are reduced to order, and our credit restored, and that for these purposes, nothing more is necessary than

a proper system of taxation. I cannot avoid expressing my sentiments on the subject in all the warmth with which they flow from my heart: I hope and pray that the facts I have stated may meet the calm attention which is due to their importance, and that such measures may be taken as shall redound to the honour and interest of our country." To the governor of Rhode Island, he observes, twenty-ninth of December, 1781: "The time is hastening on when it must be determined, perhaps for ever, whether the United States of North America shall, or shall not, possess the inestimable jewel of public credit. In the meantime, the conduct of those in public life, as far as it relates to this object, must determine whether or not they are really the friends of their country. I hope, sir, you will pardon me for adding, that if every state in the union has an equal right with yours to wait until others have complied, the congress may spare themselves the trouble of doing any further business, and their constituents may be spared the expense of keeping them together."

Eleven months having elapsed after the recommendation of congress, imposing the impost of five per cent., and the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Delaware, not having complied with it, Mr. Morris, on the third of January, 1782, address-

ed a circular letter to those states, couched in a style of firm and dignified reproof, which ought to have proved irresistible: "Congress," he says, "have done their duty in requesting revenue, and I have done mine in soliciting a compliance with their request. It only remains for me to bear testimony against those who oppose that compliance; and to declare that they, and they only, must be responsible for the consequences. They are answerable to the other states, to their fellow citizens, to the public creditors, and to the whole world. I must speak plainly on this subject: I must point out, from time to time, the reason of those things which have produced murmurs and complaints against the representative body of America. I must direct those who suffer, to those who occasion their sufferings; and those who are injured, to those who have done them wrong. Let me repeat, that the hope of our enemy is in the derangement of our finances; and let me add, that when revenue is given, that hope must cease. He, therefore, who opposes the grant of such revenue, not only opposes himself to the dictates of justice, but he labours to continue the war, and of consequence, to shed more blood, to produce more devastation, and to extend and prolong the miseries of mankind." In a communication to congress, on the eleventh of February,

1782, relative to the non-compliance of the states with their recommendations, he strongly portrays the necessity of urging obedience to their requisitions: "It is, at least," he remarks, "my duty to suggest it;—a duty which I owe to America at large, and which no hope of praise, or apprehension of blame, shall induce me to neglect. I know there is a delicacy which influences some minds, to treat the states with tenderness, and even adulation, while they are in the habitual inattention to the calls of national interest and honour. I know that delicacy, and I disclaim it. Nor will I be deterred from awaking those who slumber on the brink of ruin. But my voice, sir, is feeble; and I must pray to be assisted by the voice of the United States in congress. Supported by them, I may, perhaps, do something; but without that support, I must be a useless incumbrance. If we look back to the conduct of the several states in former times, we shall find that the negligence with which they have treated the requests of congress, has been unequalled, unless by the earnestness of entreaty with which the requests were made. And I fear there is little hope that the conduct now to be pursued, will, in one instance, become the counterpart of former experiences. We have reason to apprehend a continuance of that shameful negligence which has

marked us to a proverb, while all Europe gazed in astonishment at the unparalleled boldness and vastness of claims blended with an unparalleled indolence and imbecility of conduct. But let the several states be ever so negligent, the confederation has given no power to compel. While it confers on congress the privilege of asking every thing, it has secured to each state the prerogative of granting nothing." In a letter to the speaker of the house of assembly of Pennsylvania, dated the thirteenth of February, 1782, he gratefully acknowledges their zeal in the glorious cause, and their full and ready compliance with the requisitions of congress: "It would give me more pleasure," he feelingly remarks, "than I can express, had this example been imitated by all. Had this been the case, new recommendations would long since have been made for other revenues, sufficient to fund all the public debts, and before the present moment, you, sir, might have had the inexpressible satisfaction of signing those laws which would have dried up the tears of many fatherless children, and removed from a thousand worthy bosoms, the heavy load of affliction."

But it is impracticable to continue our extracts on this topic: during the whole course of his administration, Mr. Morris was incessantly, vigorously,

and in a great degree, unsuccessfully employed in persevering efforts to arouse the states from their lethargy, to stimulate them to a noble emulation, and to awaken them to a sense of the dangers with which their systematic indolence surrounded the common cause. But we cannot refrain from extracting a portion of his eloquent appeal made on the ninth of July, 1782, to the state of Virginia: "What, in the name of heaven, can be expected by the people of America, but absolute ruin, if they are so inattentive to the public service? Not until December will Virginia give any thing, you say, towards the service of the current year. How, then, are we to carry on those operations which are necessary? How is our country to be defended? How is our arry to be supported?—Is this what is meant by the solemn declaration to support with life and fortune, the independence of the United States?"

Such were the immense difficulties which embarrassed the operations of the financier, and against which he triumphantly struggled. In addition to the unjustifiable lukewarmness and torpor of the states, the little money which he could command was called for in a thousand different ways. The private and just claims of individuals which he was incessantly called upon to satisfy, not unfrequently drove him almost to the verge of despair. He was

fully sensible of the distresses which they endured from being in advance for the public service, but it was not in his power properly to defray the necessary expenses of the war, much less to pay off past debts. "As to making advances," he said, "from my own private fortune, I have, before my acceptance of the office I now hold, expended much more in that way than ought to have fallen to any private citizen." His reply to these numerous applications was generally uniform and conclusive: he lamented the necessity of refusal, set forth the plain fact that until the several legislatures levied taxes for the payment of past debts, it was impossible for him to discharge them; and declared that the only thing in his power was to place the debts on interest, the punctual payment of which, he was endeavouring to secure: hence, he said, if his exertions were crowned with success, the public creditors would find themselves speedily relieved, as the funded debt of the country would be sought after by monied men whenever they found that permanent revenues were established to secure the principal and interest. But arguments of this nature were little calculated to satisfy claimants, the justice of whose demands was indisputable; and who, by reason of the governmental defalcation, were involved in embarrassments and distress. The payment of the

principal of their claims was wholly impossible; and the security of it, together with the payment of the interest, entirely depended on the revenue arising from the impost law, which could not then be carried into effect, from the non-compliance of Rhode Island and Georgia to the relative recommendations of congress. The states of Massachusetts and Delaware had acceded to this measure, and Georgia had been so recently delivered from invasion, that the neglect there, could only be imputed to the distracted state of the country. The obstinate refusal, and objections of Rhode Island, however, continued in full force, and at length induced congress, for the purpose of avoiding, if possible, the pernicious consequences which might be induced from the existence of disagreeable discussions between the union and an individual state, to adopt, on the tenth of October, 1782, a resolution, "that congress call upon the states of Rhode Island and Georgia for an immediate definitive answer, whether they will comply with the recommendation of congress to vest them with power to levy a duty of five per centum on all goods imported, and on prize and prize goods." Mr. Morris, in conveying this act to the governors of the respectives states mentioned, observed: "I would wish to say nothing on this subject, but I feel myself irresistibly im-

pelled to observe, that the public creditors are numerous, meritorious, and important. It is a body composed of the most zealous whigs in America: it contains those who have supplied, and those who have composed, our armies, under the most trying circumstances. The revenues asked for, are to repay the monies advanced for our freedom, and the blood which has been shed in our cause; and, if it were necessary that pity should come in aid of gratitude and justice, I might observe that the widows and orphans of those who have spent their all, and lost their lives, in defence of America, are reduced to the extremest want, by withholding their just due." On the twenty-fourth of October, he again urges the governor of Rhode Island, in the most firm and solemn manner, to comply with the requisition: "The evil," he says, "presses hard. Public credit is at the last gasp, or rather it has expired. Not only are we to expect a formidable clamour from the abused and injured creditors, but there is really very little hope of obtaining foreign loans. For how can it be expected that a republic without funds should persuade foreigners to lend their money, while its own citizens, who have already lent theirs, can neither obtain the interest nor any solid security either for interest or principal.—This, sir, is an object of great magnitude, and

one which, directly or indirectly, concerns every inhabitant of the United States. The critical situation we stand in, has rendered it necessary for congress to demand a decided answer. No time is to be lost; for if the revenues cannot be obtained, the public creditors must be told so in plain terms. The efforts to borrow farther funds must cease of course, and then the whole weight of the war must fall on the people in one mode or the other. It is a very serious question, whether the little applause which individuals may gain by specious declamations and publications, should overbalance every consideration of national safety. This serious and important question, your legislature is now, by the representative of all America, solemnly called on to decide."

Still the clamours of the creditors continued to be directed to Mr. Morris, frequently accompanied with calumnies, invective, and even absolute insults, as shameful as they were unmerited. In vain did he urge his total inability, and acknowledge, however uselessly, his firm conviction that justice required a payment of debts, and a performance of promises, and that congress were bound to do what they had not the means of doing. In vain did he deplore, most feelingly, the sufferings of those who had entrusted their property to the public. "I

repeat again, sir," he exclaims in one of his letters on the subject, "that I most sincerely sympathise with such of my fellow citizens as are creditors to the public; but I do not vaunt that sympathy in the channel of pitying complaints, nor take the merit of compassion, by a temporary procrastination which must increase their distresses. But I demonstrate my feelings to all the world, by calling on those to afford relief who alone can afford it: and I here declare, that those who oppose the granting of revenue to congress for the liquidation of our public debts, must be alone answerable for the consequences;—for they alone are the cause of all the tears that are shed, all the complaints that are uttered, and all the miseries that are endured." In fact, the greatest part of his time was consumed in hearing and answering the most torturing solicitations from individuals in all parts of the continent, whose claims were founded in justice, but precluded from necessity. From these combined causes, the situation of his department, in the summer of 1782, was really deplorable. "I, with difficulty am enabled," he remarks, in a letter to general Washington, "to perform my engagements, and am absolutely precluded from forming new ones. I have, therefore, been under the very disagreeable necessity of suffering the public service to stand still in more lines

than one. I have been driven to the greatest shifts, and am, at this moment, unable to provide for the civil list." On the twenty-ninth of August, he addressed the commander-in-chief in a solemn, a sorrowful, and almost a desponding manner: he declared, that being resolved to act justly, and finding that he should be unable to pay the contractors, he would give them due notice that they might retire in season: he advised him that, that mournful period was fast approaching, and without infinitely greater exertions on the part of the states, that it would soon arrive. "To comprise this matter," he continued, "in a short compass;—your army is fed at a dollar for nine rations, or three dollars and a third per month to feed a soldier. Twenty-four thousand rations per day would, therefore, amount to eighty thousand dollars monthly, which is more than had been paid by all the states on the first instant. The object of this letter, sir, is to request that your excellency will consider how your army is to be subsisted, or kept together, if I am obliged to dissolve the contracts. I pray that heaven may direct your mind to some mode by which we may yet be saved. I have done all that I could, and given repeated warnings of the consequences, but it is like preaching to the dead. Every exertion I am capa-

ble of, shall be continued whilst there is the least glimmering of hope."

Notwithstanding the pressure from all quarters, this glimmering of hope induced the financier to bear up still longer the torrent of demands which was rushing in upon him. These would, long before, have overwhelmed him, had he been supported only by the revenues and supplies drawn from the states. At length, his other resources, when nearly exhausted, became useless by the total stagnation of trade, owing to the expectations of peace: In spite of all his efforts he became in arrears; "but," he remarks to Washington, ninth September, 1782, "I am determined to continue my efforts to the last moment, although at present, I really know not which way to turn myself."—At length, weak and tottering as he was, the threatened storm burst over him; but his great mind repelled its fury, and triumphed over difficulties which might have driven the firmest to despair. At the close of September, the contractors declared explicitly that they could no longer be responsible for supplying the troops on the terms agreed on in their contracts. They demanded from the financier, assurances of indemnification at the close of the contract, for all damages sustained from the public inability to perform their engagements; and concluded with the cautionary

declaration, that if they did not receive such assurances before the first of October, they would surrender their contracts. Mr. Morris, properly and decisively, refused to comply with these demands, because, from the moment those assurances were made, there would be no longer any restraint on the contractors. Negligence or profusion might have extended the damages to any amount, and his promise would have bound the public to abide by the pernicious consequences. The financier, consequently, from his comprehensive and wonderful resources, endeavoured to make immediate arrangements to meet the threatened danger; but such was the paucity of the returns from the states, that he was compelled to advise the proper authorities that unless means could be devised to feed the army at a long credit, he must, himself, command the contractors to desist, and desire the commander-in-chief to subsist his troops by military collection. "I know well," he observed, "that the service must suffer; but I also know that an early suffering is better than a late ruin; and I find myself reduced to the necessity of choosing between these two evils, by the negligence of the states. Whatever be the consequences, it must be theirs to answer it; and I hope the people will at length distinguish between those who admonish them to

their good, and those who flatter them to their destruction."—The appearances of peace at this moment, greatly augmented these evils; and the general cautions on that subject from Europe, together with the most pointed remonstrances from the public officers, could not prevent the lethargy which the very name of peace extended through all the states. At this crisis, Mr. Morris strongly recommended to the public ministers in Europe to take the most suitable measures to prevent the people from falling into the snare which the enemy had laid. "Undue security in opinion," he remarked, "is generally very hurtful in effect, and I dread the consequences of it here, if the war is to be carried on, which is not improbable."

On the first of October, 1782, congress again required the several states to make speedy payment of their respective quotas into the public treasury, that they might be enabled thereby to pay the officers and soldiers of the army. In urging a compliance with this renewed requisition, Mr. Morris, incited by the sufferings of the troops, and indignant at the embarrassing and laborious situation in which he was himself placed, as the organ of the government, argued with unusual severity: "It is a mighty fashionable thing," he said, "to declaim on the virtue and sufferings of the army, and it is a very com-

mon thing for those very declaimers to evade, by one artifice or another, the payment of those taxes which alone can remove every source of complaint. Now, sir, it is a matter of perfect indifference by what subterfuge this evasion is effected, whether by voting against taxes, or, what is more usual, agreeing to them in the first instance, but taking care, in the second, to provide no competent means to compel a collection;—which cunning device leaves the army at last, as a kind of pensionary upon the voluntary contributions of good whigs, and suffers those of a different complexion, to skulk and screen themselves entirely from the weight and inconvenience."—Truly, indeed, did Mr. Morris observe, "my credit has already been on the brink of ruin;—if that goes, all is gone." To illustrate this fact, it is only necessary to state, that in October, 1782, he was obliged to sell a portion of clothing, arrived for the use of the army, for the purpose of *paying debts for needle work, done by people in extreme indigence*, amounting to twelve thousand dollars.

The embarrassments in the department of finance now continued daily to increase. Mr. Morris was well aware of what is known to every body, that although contrivances may be used to procrastinate a payment, it must at length come from some quarter or other: he was, however, driven to, and

exhausted, all the expedients he could devise, but at last he found himself in arrears. Impelled by the dangerous condition of the treasury, he applied to congress, on the twenty-first of October, 1782, for directions and relief; and on the same day, appealed to the governors of the several states in a style so noble, so dignified, and so forcible, that it would seem, at this day, to have been sufficient to sweep away the petty feelings of local advantages which impeded the progress of the war, embarrassed the operations of the financier, and devoted the heroic army to want and starvation. "There are certain arguments, sir," he observed, "which ought not to be used, if it is possible to avoid them, but which every one invested with public authority, should suggest to his own mind for the government of his own conduct. How long is a nation that will do nothing for itself, to rely on the aid of others?—In a war waged by one country to obtain revenue from another, what is to be expected in case of conquest?—How long will one part of a community bear the burdens of the whole?—How long will an army undergo want in the midst of plenty?—How long will they endure misery without complaint, injustice without reproach, and wrongs without redress?—These are questions which cannot be solved by arithmetical calculation. The moral

causes which may procrastinate, or precipitate, events, are hidden from mortal view. But it is within the bounds of human knowledge to determine, that all earthly things have some limits which it is imprudent to exceed, others which it is dangerous to exceed, and some which can never be exceeded. It is possible that we are near the close of this war, and, perhaps, we are only in the middle of it. But if the war should continue, we have to blame ourselves; for, were those resources called into action which we really possess, the foreign enemies would soon lose all hope, and abandon their enterprise. The greater injury, therefore, which we sustain, is not from foreign, but from domestic enemies;—from those who impede the necessary exertions.—I have mentioned one among many instances, to show the consequence of withholding the public revenue; and I take the liberty to observe, that it would be more manly to declare at once for unlimited submission to British tyranny, than to make specious declarations against it, and yet take the direct road to bring it about, by opposing the measures necessary for our defence. That open declaration will doubtless be restrained by the fear of general resentment, but the other conduct is so much the more dangerous, as it is calculated to close people's eyes, while they ap-

proach the precipice, that they may be thrown down with the greater ease, and more absolute certainty."

But a detail of the measures which Mr. Morris pursued to stimulate the exertions of the states, would not only exceed our limits, but comprise a tedious history of ineffectual, but reiterated complaints, entreaties, menaces, and remonstrances. "Whatever expedient," he remarked to Dr. Franklin, "could suggest itself, which might have that desirable effect, I have tried; and I do assure you, that when I look back at the scenes through which I have passed, they strike my own mind with astonishment." The situation of the financier, at this moment, was truly distressing. Compelled to direct the finances of a country almost without revenue, and involved in an expensive war,—surrounded by creditors whose distresses, while they increased their clamours, rendered it more difficult to appease them,—an army ready to disband or mutiny,—a government whose sole authority consisted in the power of framing recommendations,—surely it is not necessary to add any colouring to such a piece; and yet truth would justify more than fancy could paint. The settlement of accounts, long and intricate beyond comprehension, became next to impossible, from the want of that authority which

was on the verge of annihilation, owing to those confusions which nothing could dissipate except the complete liquidation of accounts, and an honest provision for payment.—During the whole course of his administration, his time was dissipated, his mind perplexed, and his temper assailed, by the persistence, the clamours, and the insults, of private claimants. Nor, notwithstanding his peculiar urbanity and mildness of disposition, it was not in human nature to endure unruffled, a continued series of impatient, persecuting, and pressing demands, not unfrequently mingled with petulance, and sometimes, even with personal insult. "If," he remarks in one of these momentary excitements, but with justice, "the public creditors and their fellow citizens, instead of uttering complaints on every occasion, would exert themselves in paying their own, and influencing their neighbours to pay their, taxes for the continental service, I should soon hope to see our affairs on such a footing as to silence all complaints; but whilst people are grasping at every farthing the public possess, and no measures are taken to replenish the fountain from whence payments spring, what can they expect?" In one instance the secretary of Mr. Morris was personally assaulted by an irritable French captain; and he

always returned unopened, communications from those who had made use of unbecoming or unjustifiable language. Four French officers, towards the conclusion of the war, finding that entreaties could not draw money from an empty treasury, determined to embrace a more vigorous course by resorting to threats: they, accordingly, assumed a lofty attitude, and addressed a letter to the financier, *demanding* the payment which they had previously solicited. But they were little acquainted with the character of Mr. Morris, who made the following laconic reply:

"*Office of Finance, 23d January*, 1784.

"GENTLEMEN,—I have received this morning your application. I make the earliest answer to it. You *demand instant payment.* I have *no money to pay you with.*"

But whenever these applications were couched in proper terms, he uniformly sympathised with the sufferers, and lamented the necessity which forbade him to satisfy their just claims.

During these gigantic exertions in vanquishing obstacles, which threatened momentarily to overpower him, and which would have baffled the united energies of congress if unsupported by the financier, it will hardly be credited by posterity, that

Mr. Morris was continually the victim of base and unfeeling slander;

> "Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
> Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath
> Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie
> All corners of the world: kings, queens, and states,
> Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave
> This viperous slander enters."

It is probable that, as these vile calumnies related to himself personally, he would never have condescended to notice them, but believing that the design was not so much to injure him, as to involve the national affairs committed to his charge, he frequently adverted to, and refuted, them, in his official correspondence. In the beginning of the year 1782, the principal charges, by the propagation of which, the financier was rewarded for saving his country from ruin, had resolved themselves into the following points. 1. That he had robbed the eastern states of their specie. 2. That he was partial to Pennsylvania, being commercially connected with half the merchants of Philadelphia. 3. That he was partial to the disaffected. 4. That he had established a bank for sinister purposes. 5. That his plan, and the plan of Pennsylvania, was to keep the state of Virginia poor. 6. That, with the secretary of congress, and a Mr. Coffin, he was engaged in speculation.—Now, with regard to the

first point, the eastern states themselves entertained a totally different opinion, although there were a few persons in different parts of those states, who, from their extreme latitude of conscience, did not scruple to assert what they knew to be false, and to invent falsehoods with the design to injure the public service, and sow dissensions among the states. In fact, Mr. Morris had not received, either from the eastern or the southern states, one shilling of specie from the time of his appointment to the office of financier, although he had sent very considerable sums both eastward and southward, as the exigencies of the service required.

As to the second point, that he was commercially connected with half the merchants of Philadelphia, had it been as true as it was false, the conclusion that he was partial to Pennsylvania would by no means follow. A merchant, as such, can be attached particularly to no country: his mere place of residence, as a merchant, is perfectly accidental; and it would be just as reasonable to conclude that an American residing at Batavia and trading to China, must be partial to the Batavians and Chinese. The story of his partiality towards Pennsylvania, however, was very assiduously circulated, and obtained an extensive currency. It was supposed that he must necessarily be partial to that state, because

he resided in it: the assertion, therefore, was made, and the contracts he had entered into were brought as the evidence to support it.—Mr. Morris had received from Pennsylvania, for the service of the year 1781, one hundred and eighty thousand dollars, besides a warrant, then unpaid, on their treasury, for nearly ninety thousand more;—and the contracts for the state had not amounted to that sum. No other state in the union had advanced a single shilling for the expenditures of that year. Now, while he was ungratefully charged with this partiality, the financier had actually exhausted his credit, and supplied every shilling of money which he could command from his private fortune, to support and succour the southern states. This did not arise from any partiality in their favour, for such a man would neither endeavour to ingratiate himself with them on such principles, nor subject himself to the ignominy of just reproach from others. He did it for *the general good.*

His partiality to the disaffected was among the threadbare topics of defamation, which had been so generally applied that they had lost their effect. It was, moreover, remarked in those days, that this particular aspersion was generally cast on those who least deserved it, and by those who were in a fair way of becoming disaffected themselves. Such

a charge against so steadfast and untiring a labourer in the cause, merely showed that he possessed inveterate enemies who had nothing to allege against him, and were, therefore, compelled to resort to the regions of fiction for the ground of calumny.

One of the most brilliant acts of Mr. Morris's administration was the establishment of the bank of North America. That bank had already saved America from the efforts of her avowed, and the intrigues of her concealed enemies; and it saved her from those who, while they clamoured loudly against the administration for doing so little, sedulously laboured to deprive it of the means of doing any thing. "The bank," said Mr. Morris, in reference to this subject, "will exist in spite of calumny, operate in spite of opposition, and do good in spite of malevolence." If there had been sinister purposes in view, it would have been easy to show what they were. The operations of a bank are such plain matters of arithmetic that they are open to the most common understanding: there is nothing of mystery, disguise, nor concealment, connected with them. Therefore, as these sinister views never were, and never could have been, shown, that defect of proof was itself a proof that the thing did not exist. "But," Mr. Morris remarks, "the matter does not terminate here. A groundless, unfounded,

opposition against measures of public utility, must proceed from some cause. If it proceed from an opposition to the public interests, their conduct is dangerous: but if it proceed from aversion to me—I pity them."

It was a strange assertion, that either Mr. Morris, or the state of Pennsylvania, should have formed a plan to keep Virginia poor. It was, indeed, probable that Pennsylvania would become rich: her soil and climate were good, the people quiet and industrious, and their rulers began to be sensible of their true interests, by encouraging commerce, by laying aside all the idle systems of specific supplies, and by contenting themselves with laying money taxes. Such a people would naturally and certainly become rich. On the other hand, if Virginia or any other state, continued poor, it was their own fault. Prudence, diligence, and economy, promote national prosperity, and vice, indolence, and prodigality, involve national ruin. But so far from wishing to impoverish Virginia, Mr. Morris constantly laboured, both in his public and private applications, to bring about those measures which were calculated to make her wealthy and powerful. "In the moment of cool reflection," he observes, "this will be acknowledged, whenever my measures are adopted it will be known, and in that

moment, those who, from ignorance or wickedness, have opposed themselves to their country's good, will be known and despised."—The charge of speculating, in conjunction with the secretary of congress, and Mr. Coffin, was one of those foolish and idle things which were not worth an answer: the whole transaction upon which it was grounded, was known to the commander-in-chief, and to a committee of congress, before any thing was done. However severely he may have been secretly affected by the ingratitude of some among his countrymen, he seldom evinced any other sentiments on the subject but pity or contempt, mingled with unfailing dignity and candour. Being informed that certain accusations were about to appear, relative to his official conduct, "I am very indifferent," he replied, "to the intended attacks on my measures; if those ingenious gentlemen can point out such as are more eligible to the public good, I am ready to pursue them, or to give the opportunity of doing it to themselves;—provided they can prevail on America to trust them with my office, which I wish were placed in any other safe hands." Almost every measure adopted by Mr. Morris afforded a handle to detraction among those who were the slaves of sectional prejudices, or the worst, because the concealed, enemies to independence; and not

a few charges emanated from the envious feelings with which the jaundiced eye, and the bad heart, view the success of individual merit, and a rapid rise to power and distinction. To these were added a host of public creditors, clamorous for payment, reduced to poverty and distress, and without sense or willingness to discover that the states, and not the financier, were the cause of all their miseries. When the torpor of those states had compelled him to form contracts at a high rate, in October, 1782, he thus writes to colonel Tilghman: "I shall not be surprised if I meet with blame for doing the only good thing possible, in one of the worst of all possible situations. Those, my good friend, who wish to hunt down the financier, can be, at times, either all alive, or quite indifferent, to the feelings of the army, just as it may best suit the purposes of the chase. For my own part, I am not much concerned about the opinions of such men, while I have in my favour the voice of the wise and the good, added to the fair testimony of an approving conscience."

At length, worn down by excessive toil, harassed by incessant claims which he could not satisfy, and subjected to hopeless mortifications and embarrassments from the defalcation of revenue, he resolved to abandon a situation in which he

could be no longer useful, before his own honour and credit became entangled in the labyrinth, into which state prejudices laboured to plunge the nation, and from which he had, till that period, successfully preserved it. On the twenty-fourth of January, 1783, he advised the president of congress that as nothing but the public danger could have induced him to accept the office, so he had determined to hold it until the danger was past, or else meet his ruin in the common wreck; that, under greater difficulties than were apprehended by the most timid, and with less support than was expected by the least sanguine, the generous confidence of the public had accomplished more than he had presumed to hope; that his attention to the public debts, arose from the conviction that funding them on solid revenues was the last essential work of our glorious revolution, the accomplishment of which, was among the objects nearest his heart, and to effect which, he would continue to sacrifice time, property, and domestic bliss; that many late circumstances had so far lessened the apprehensions from the common enemy, that his original motives had almost ceased to operate; but that other circumstances had postponed the establishment of public credit in such a manner that he feared it would never be made; and that to increase the

national debts while the prospect of paying them was diminishing, did not consist with his ideas of integrity. Hence, he announced his intention to quit a station which had become utterly insupportable. But, lest the public measures might be deranged by any precipitation, he consented to serve until the end of May; with the understanding that, if effectual measures were not taken, by that time, to make permanent provision for the public debts of every kind, congress would be pleased to appoint some other person to be the superintendant of finance. "I should be unworthy," he said, "of the confidence reposed in me by my fellow citizens, if I did not explicitly declare, that I will never be the minister of injustice."

The letter to congress conveying this determination produced considerable agitation, as in case of Mr. Morris's resignation, no other individual could be found so capable of conducting the affairs of the department, whether it regarded his political sagacity, his financial knowledge, or private resources. An injunction of secrecy was immediately passed; but Mr. Morris, after two months delay, addressed a letter to the house, stating that a number of those who had contracted engagements with him, placed a personal reliance on him for the fulfilment of them; that as the time was fast ap-

proaching when he must quit the office, it was proper for him to make the necessary preparations, and make this due and seasonable information to those who had confided in him. He therefore prayed that the injunction of secrecy might be removed. On the twenty-sixth of February, this petition was granted, and a committee appointed to which his letters were referred. On the fifth of March, this committee was superseded by another, consisting of five members, appointed to devise the proper measures to be taken in consequence of the letters from the superintendant of finance.

Nothing would have induced Mr. Morris to take this step but a painful conviction that the situation of those to whom the public were indebted was desperate. In a letter to general Washington, dated the twenty-seventh of February, he says that he sincerely believed that a great majority of the members of congress wish to do justice, but would not adopt the necessary measures, because they were afraid of offending their states. He strongly sympathised with the army and the situation of its commander. "I did flatter myself," he observed, "that I should have been able to present them that justice to which they are entitled, and in the mean time, I laboured to make their situation as tolerable as circumstances would permit. My thanks are due

to all our officers, for I know that unwearied pains have been taken to give them disagreeable impressions; and I am, therefore, doubly indebted for the just sentiments which, amid so many misrepresentations, they have constantly entertained. I hope my successor will be more fortunate than I have been, and that our glorious revolution may be crowned with those acts of justice, without which the greatest human glory is but the shadow of a shade." To general Greene he remarked, that the step he was about to take was inconceivably painful to him, but that there was no alternative. While it was asserted on all hands that the national debts ought to be paid, it was evident that no efficient measures would be adopted for that purpose. "I felt," he said, "the consequences of my resignation on public credit; I felt the probable derangement of our affairs; I felt the difficulties my successor would have to encounter; but still I felt, above all things, that it was a duty to be honest. This first and highest principle has been obeyed. I do not hold myself answerable for consequences. These are to be attributed to the opposers of just measures, let their rank and station be what it may. I expect much obloquy for my conduct, because this is what I know to be the reward for any conduct whatever, which is right. To the slander I

am indifferent, and still more indifferent about the attempts to question the services I have rendered."

Among the accusations publicly preferred against Mr. Morris, was the destruction of that public credit, which, unsupported by him, would long before have been annihilated. Men totally ignorant of the state of affairs, put on the conduct, which severe necessity compelled him to pursue, the most malicious misconstructions, and affecting an intimate knowledge of things, charged him with the ruin of public credit, and interpreted the terms of his resignation into reflections upon congress. On the very day, however, on which he was publicly charged with these offences, despatches arrived from Europe conveying the intelligence that the credit of congress was at an end.

After repeated conferences with a committee of congress, Mr. Morris was induced to continue in office, under the express stipulation that his duties were to be limited to the particular object of fulfiling his existing engagements, and those which the necessity of affairs might compel him to form; and congress, relieved by this determination, resolved, on the second of May, 1783, that he should receive their firm support towards completing his engagements.

This resignation afforded fresh fuel to the jealous and satanic fires, which burned in the bosoms of the disaffected. It was represented as a factious desire to excite civil commotions; and the army, it was said, was to be employed as the instruments to promote flagitious, interested views. These vile slanders ever found admittance into minds which should forever have been shut against them. But it is only necessary to refer to the administration of Mr. Morris, to show whether a sincere regard to public justice and public interest, or a sinister devotion to his own private emolument, were the influential motives which regulated his conduct.—It is well known, moreover, that his resignation was not made until he was confident of peace. On being asked by a committee of congress, previous to the cessation of hostilities, if he would continue in case the war continued, his answer was, that "the same motives which first induced his acceptance would, in that case, continue to operate."

The happy tidings of peace brought no cessation of pain and embarrassments to the department of finance. Every thing done by the financier was converted into a ground of calumny, and he acknowledged that his desire to relieve that army for whose support he had so long laboured, was greatly cooled, from the information that a great part of it

joined in the reproaches which he had incurred for its benefit.

The spring of 1784 found the finances in a still more miserable condition. A large sum of bills drawn for account of the United States on the credit of a loan in Holland had been protested for non-acceptance, and the little show of credit that had been supported abroad was now totally gone. It was the deepest and sincerest wish of Mr. Morris to have been the instrument towards establishing the affairs of America upon a solid basis, and almost every effort within the scope of human power had been exerted to effect that object. At this crisis, he foresaw that the country, without a miracle, would be plunged into a state of inconceivable confusion and distress. At this period, unsupported and persecuted, he formed the intention of peremptorily resigning his station. "I think it necessary," he remarked to a friend, "for America that I should quit my office, even admitting the justice of those flattering expressions contained in your letter. I hope that persons will be found as honest and more capable; but, be that as it may, the people will, I hope, more easily believe, when they hear truth from some other quarter. If not, they will, at least, feel the consequences which, though so often predicted, have not been provided against."

On the twenty-fifth of March, he remarked, "my successors will perhaps be believed when they describe our situation, and at least, that voice of party, which has hitherto opposed the public service *on private principles*, will be silenced." On the sixth of May, he requested congress to make eventual arrangements for administering the finances, and to appoint a committee to inspect the conduct of the department. Congress accordingly appointed a board consisting of three commissioners to superintend the treasury of the United States, after a well merited eulogium on the very great advantages derived from the arrangement and management of their finances. The appointment of the board of treasury was, in itself, a flattering token of his powerful abilities, which had so long been able to support and conduct a department, which no single man now seemed capable of performing.

Mr. Morris, however, still continued to preside over the treasury, and make the final arrangements for his retirement. As the period appointed by congress as the termination of his official labours, approached, he became extremely anxious to impress on the public mind the undoubted fulfilment of his engagements, and the unimpaired value of his notes. Accordingly, on the eleventh of October, he issued a public notice, declaring that he had

taken measures to provide for the payment of his various engagements on behalf of the United States, and particularly for such of his notes as were in circulation, and that, although he should not be in office, yet those notes would all be paid at maturity. For such payment he *pledged himself personally* to the holders, and, therefore, requested that, if any attempt should be made to obtain them, by any suggestion, at less than the specified value, such attempts might be defeated. On the first day of November, 1784, Mr. Morris finally resigned his official duties, and, after an arduous administration of nearly three years, returned to the source from which it was derived, the commission which he had so honourably and perseveringly borne. In rendering an account of his stewardship, he published an address to the inhabitants of the United States, which, together with the comprehensive details of his mode of managing the finances, ought to be incorporated in the course of the historical education of American youth. His concluding words were written in the true spirit of political foresight, and were only rendered nugatory by the establishment of the federal constitution. "The inhabitant of a little hamlet, may feel pride in the sense of separate independence. But if there be not one government, which can draw forth and direct the

efforts, the combined efforts, of United America, our independence is but a name, our freedom a shadow, and our dignity a dream. To you, fellow-citizens, these sentiments are addressed by one who has felt their force. In descending from that eminence on which your representatives had placed him, he avoids the shafts which calumny had aimed. He has no longer, therefore, any *personal* interest in those jealousies and distrusts which have embarrassed his administration, and may prove your ruin. He no longer asks confidence in himself. But it is his duty to declare his sincere opinion, that if you will not repose in the members of that general federal government which you yourselves have chosen, that confidence and those powers, which are necessary, you must, and you will, (in no very distant period,) become the dupes of European politics. What may be the final event, time only can discover; but the probability is, that, first divided, then governed, our children may lament, in chains, the folly of their fathers. May heaven avert these evils, and endue us with wisdom so to act, as may best promote the present and future peace, prosperity, and happiness, of our country."—On the retirement of this eminent man from office, it was affirmed by two members of the Massachusetts delegation, "that it cost congress at the rate

of eighteen millions per annum, hard dollars, to carry on the war, till he was appointed financier, and then it cost them but about four millions.

In addition to the arduous duties already imposed on Mr. Morris, congress resolved, on the seventh of September, 1781, that until an agent of marine should be appointed, all the duties, powers, and authority, assigned to that office, should devolve upon, and be executed by, the superintendant of finance. This additional burthen was extremely disagreeable to Mr. Morris: "I could have wished," he observed, "that this task had fallen to the lot of some other person. I could have wished to bestow on this object an attention undissipated by other cares. But it is now some time since I have learned to sacrifice to the public service, my ease, my wishes, and my inclinations." No agent, however, being appointed, he continued to perform the duties of this office, and regulate the affairs of our unfortunate navy, until the close of the year 1784.

No individual, no public body, did more than Mr. Morris to extricate the country from pecuniary embarrassments. But such exertions are not blazoned with the brilliant exploits of conquerors and heroes, which illuminate the annals of a country. It has been shown, however, that the operations of the machinery which guided the war of the

revolution, would often have stood still, had not Morris been principally instrumental in furnishing the moving power, after all preceding means had perished. His extraordinary powers in the department of finance; the extent of his influence in the commercial relations of the nation, both at home and abroad; and his successful exertions in the accomplishment of its independence; have elicited the honourable acknowledgment that to the zeal and ability of Washington alone, were superior honours due; nor are there wanting many of those who now enjoy the blessings in the attainment of which he so gloriously participated, who fully feel and acknowledge the truth of the sentiments maintained by the Italian historian, that "the Americans certainly owed, *and still owe*, as much acknowledgment to the financial operations of Robert Morris, as to the negotiations of Benjamin Franklin, or even to the arms of Washington."* It has been well written, that such important services rendered to this country, while they entitle Mr. Morris to universal admiration, should, at the same time, have secured him some distinguished testimony of public gratitude. As he richly merited, so ought he to have enjoyed, in old age, the uninterrupted blessings of peace and happiness. But at the conclusion

*Botta's War of Independence, vol. III, p. 343, Transl.

of the war, he was abandoned by the propitious fortunes which seemed attendant on all his prior enterprises. He had successfully husbanded the funds of the public, but vast and ruinous speculation totally prostrated his own pecuniary concerns.

But his financial fame was not bounded by the limits of this vast continent. It pervaded every region of Europe, where the bloody and protracted struggle of an infant nation against the gigantic power of Great Britain, baffled the calculations of the politician, and excited the sympathy and admiration of the virtuous and benevolent. "Your conduct, activity, and address," said our minister at the court of Versailles, in a letter to Mr. Morris, dated the twelfth of August, 1782, "as financier, and provider for the exigencies of the state, is much admired and praised here; its good consequences being so evident, particularly with regard to the rising credit of our country, and the value of bills." Every sacrifice that could be made, he offered up on the altar of patriotism. He abandoned the ease and enjoyments of domestic life, and devoted his time, his talents, and his fortune, to the public benefit. It may be said of him, as it was of the Roman Curtius, that he sacrificed himself for the good of the commonwealth. He discarded all attention to his private business, and consigned it

to other hands, being resolved not to mingle his own affairs with those of the public, or permit his mind to be, for a moment, diverted from his high official duties. He never permitted himself, or his private concerns, to interfere with the business of the nation: so far, in fact, did he carry this refined idea of duty, that he inflexibly adhered to a rule which he had laid down on his installation as financier, never to recommend any individual to office. He introduced into the department, every reform which the most judicious and rigid economy could devise. His sole system of finance was that which resulted from the plain self-evident dictates of moral honesty. Taxation and economy were the two great pillars by which that system could alone be supported; "and," said Mr. Morris, "if the states will provide the former, I will pledge myself for the latter, so far as my abilities will permit." They did not supply it: yet to the financier, every eye was turned; to him was stretched forth the empty hand of every public creditor, and against him, instead of the state authorities, were the complaints and imprecations of every unsatisfied claimant directed.

The assembly of Pennsylvania having, in 1785, annulled the charter of the bank of North America, which, under the fostering care of Mr. Morris, had

so largely contributed to the support of the war, it was resolved to send the most influential delegates from the city of Philadelphia, for the purpose, if practicable of obtaining its renewal, and thereby relieve a great proportion of the stockholders, comprising a very helpless portion of our citizens, whose comfortable support depended on the continuance of the institution. For this express purpose, Mr. Morris, ever ready to devote himself to the public good, consented, 1786, to become a candidate, in conjunction with Mr. Fitzsimmons and Mr. Clymer. The real cause of the measure which had been adopted by the preceding legislature, was ascribed to the continuance of the same party-spirit which had been so violently opposed to Mr. Morris and his friends, during his financial administration. The debates on the occasion excited great interest among all classes of society. The argumentative force and eloquence of Mr. Morris would have produced conviction in the mind of any man, not previously determined, if possible, to destroy the bank, and not abandoned to the government of party prejudice. The question to renew the charter was lost by a majority of thirteen; but the exertions of the friends of the institution were, in the succeeding legislature, crowned with success.

In the following year, Mr. Morris was elected a member of the memorable convention which framed the federal constitution;—a convention constituting a body of political learning, and virtue, from which alone could have emanated the never-dying document that is destined to preserve and perpetuate the prosperity of the country. It was in this august assembly that he again met, in solemn deliberation, many mighty spirits who had rode on the revolutionary storm, and diverted or repelled its fury. It was here that he recognised, as coadjutors, in forming a permanent bond of union for the country whose fetters they had assisted to sever, the Sherman, the Franklin, the Clymer, the Wilson, the Read, the Wythe, and the Gerry, who, with strong hearts, and steady hands, had affixed their signatures to the imperishable charter of '76, where his own name was blazoned for posterity.

Mr. Morris, in the course of his administration, had severely felt, and deeply, but ineffectually deplored, the want of an efficient federal government. The feebleness of the United States in congress, and the excessive powers of the individual states, had been the primary causes which embarrassed his operations, and rendered his best devised exertions abortive. On this subject, his complaints were uniform and incessant. On the twenty-fourth of

April, 1782, he observes, in a letter to general Greene; "I have observed by the tenor of several of your letters on the subject of the confederation, that your sentiments coincide entirely with my own. The inefficacy of that instrument is daily felt, and the want of obligatory and coercive clauses on the states will probably be productive of the most fatal consequences." In a letter to Alexander Hamilton, dated the twenty-eighth of August, 1782, he more fully develops his sentiments on the subject. "I have not even yet seen the resolutions of your legislature relative to an extension of the powers of congress. Indeed, power is generally such a darling object with weak minds, that they must feel extreme reluctance to bid it farewell; neither do I believe that any thing will induce a general consent to part with it, but a perfect sense of absolute necessity. This may arise from two sources;—the one, of reason; and the other, of feeling;—the former, more safe and more certain; the latter, always severe, and often dangerous. It is, my dear sir, in circumstances like this, that a patriotic mind, seeking the great good of the whole, on enlightened principles, can best be distinguished from those vulgar souls whose narrow optics can see but the little circle of selfish concerns. Unhappily, such souls are but too common, and but too often fill the seats

of dignity and authority. A firm, wise, manly, system of federal government is what I once wished, what I now hope, what I dare not expect, but what I will not despair of."

On the first of October, 1788, Mr. Morris received a renewed mark of the high confidence which he continued to enjoy among his fellow citizens: he was appointed by the general assembly to represent the state of Pennsylvania in the first senate of the United States, that assembled at New York, after the ratification of the federal compact.

Although Mr. Morris received no other than a common English education, he possessed superior talents, which, fostered by care, and ripened by experience, compensated this early defect, and rendered their possessor as conspicuous in the common intercourse of society, as he was in the cabinet. His conversation was cheerful, easy, and interesting; but not often of a literary cast, owing to the want of a classical education. He was, however, by no means deficient in general reading. With a mind at once acute and penetrating, he was extremely well versed in what are called the affairs of the world, both public and private. His political knowledge was very extensive, and it was almost all gained from practical sources, and social intercourse. His public speaking was fluent, correct,

and impressive. He was not a frequent, and was, therefore, a more welcome speaker; being always attended to with profound attention. At the beginning of his financial administration, and while he was a member of the legislature of Pennsylvania, he exerted himself to abolish the pernicious continental currency. A great excitement prevailed on the occasion. General Mifflin moved that the tender laws be repealed; and Mr. Morris supported the motion in a strain of argumentative eloquence, which, while it bore down all opposition, astonished even those who knew him best, and excited general admiration among the numerous body by which he was surrounded. His talents and address in public meetings were peculiarly conspicuous, and successfully exerted on many occasions, when prudence, temperance, and firmness, were required to appease popular excitements, or lead it into the proper channel. Such was the case at the town-meeting convened in Philadelphia, relative to the depreciation of continental currency; an evil which the artful and disaffected had attributed partly to the pleadings of the lawyers in favour of tories, and partly to the rise in the price of provisions, made by the merchants!—Mr. Morris wrote with ease and perspicuity, both in business and friendly cor-

respondence, and his familiar notes and letters were frequently pleasant and amusing.

As a merchant, his enterprise and credit were equalled only by his unimpeachable integrity. The Hon. judge Peters, as register of the British vice admiralty, previous to the revolution, bears ample testimony of the correct conduct of Mr. Morris in his commercial concerns, when breaches of the revenue laws were not uncommon. As the acting partner of one of the most distinguished mercantile establishments in this country, he had become well known in all the principal trading towns of Europe, previous to the revolution. It has been published, as the character and situation of Robert Morris, that he was a very rich merchant, and consequently a man of every country, because commerce bears every where the same character: under monarchies, it is free; it is an egotist, in republics, a stranger, or rather a citizen of the universe, it excludes alike the virtues and the prejudices that stand in the way of its interest. It has also been asserted that the fortunate return of his vessels, and the success of his privateers, increased his riches beyond his expectations, if not his wishes, and that he was, "in fact, so much accustomed to the success of his privateers, that when he was observed, on a Sunday, to be more serious than usual,

the conclusion was, that no prize had arrived in the preceding week."* . M. Chastelleux was quarter-master-general to the French auxiliaries in America, and all those acquainted with his respectable talents, were astonished that he could be the author of the travels which he published, and the fictions which they contained. The assertion that the Sunday seriousness or pleasantry of Mr. Morris was at all connected with the arrival, or non-arrival, of prizes, is as unworthy of M. Chastelleux as it is inapplicable to Mr. Morris: his privateering concerns possessed little or no influence over his gravity or cheerfulness. He only justified the practice as being inevitably necessary in *our* war, in which our public ships were of little service, and formed a miserable contrast to our present navy. He was always of opinion with Dr. Franklin, on this subject; and detested the general practice as a licensed buccaneering. But, in common with a large proportion of those who opposed it, in principle, as an indiscriminate custom, he believed that the annoyances to the British trade, and the benefits which public affairs derived from our private armed vessels, overbalanced the general objections to a practice, which, in common wars, especially those en-

* Chastelleux' Trav. vol. I, p. 199.

tered into by the ambition or rivalry of princes, is nothing less than maritime plunder by one individual from another, guiltless in the quarrel. The people of England, operated on by national pride and delusion, were as malignantly hostile to the people of this country, as was their government; though many worthy individuals formed honourable exceptions. It was, therefore, a war between people and people; and not merely between prince and prince: hence, individual hostility seemed more allowable than common cases could warrant. And, in fact, however it may be morally, it is a moot point whether it be not politically, indispensable, legally to allow and regulate this deplorable practice, rather than subject the ocean to lawless plunderers;—for such they will be, as all experience evinces.

It has also been stated that Mr. Morris certainly enriched himself greatly by the war, and possessed a great variety of means for acquiring wealth;—that his connexions with Mr. Holker, then consul general of France at Philadelphia, and the exclusive permission to ship cargoes of flour and other produce in the time of general embargoes, were to him the sources of immense profit;—and that his situation gave him many similar opportunities, of which his capital, his credit, and abilities, always

enabled him to take advantage. "What purchases of tobacco," it is written, "what profits of every kind, might not a man of Mr. Morris's abilities make, with such powerful advantages?"* All these vile insinuations are totally false. Mr. Morris never engaged in speculation during his continuance in office; he never enjoyed any commercial monopoly or privileges on his own account, although, as it has been already shown, he incurred the odium by covering the operations of congress; and, so far from enriching himself by the advantages of his station, it was in that station where the seeds of his pecuniary destruction were sown. It not only actually impoverished him at the moment, but the vastness of his money transactions, and the almost boundless scope of his financial duties, gave to his mind a correspondent tone, which, no doubt, mainly concurred in leading him from the proper pursuits of commerce, into a train of enormous, unmanageable, and ruinous land speculations.

At the conclusion of the war he was among the first who engaged in the East India and China trade, which, by an increase, as astonishing as it is unexampled, has now become a lucrative branch of revenue and commerce. In the spring of 1784, he

* Chastelleux' Trav. p. 200, *Note*, 201, *Note*.

despatched the ship Empress, of China, captain Green, from New York to Canton, being the first American vessel that ever appeared in that port. He also made the first attempt to effect what is termed an "out of season" passage to China: this passage is effected by going round the south cape of New Holland, thus avoiding the periodical winds prevalent at certain periods in the China sea. In prosecution of this object the ship Alliance, captain Read, equipped with ten twelve-pounders, and sixty-five men, sailed from the Delaware on the twentieth of June, 1787, and arrived in safety, on the twenty-second of December, at Canton, where considerable inquiries were made by the European commanders respecting the route that had been taken, as it was wholly a novel thing for a vessel to arrive at that season of the year. As no ship had ever before made a similar passage, great astonishment was manifested; and the lords of the British admiralty subsequently applied to Mr. Morris, for information with regard to the track of the ship. It is said that her probable route was, previous to her departure, marked out by Mr. Morris, with the assistance of Mr. Gouverneur Morris.

Although active in the acquisition of wealth as a merchant, no one more freely parted with his gain, for public or private purposes of a meritorious

nature, whether to support the credit of the government, to promote objects of humanity, or local improvement, the welfare of meritorious individuals in society, or a faithful commercial servant. The prime of his life was engaged in discharging the most important civil trusts to his country, that could possibly fall to the lot of man; and millions passed through his hands, without the smallest tenable insinuation against his correctness, amidst "defaulters of uncounted thousands."*

Notwithstanding his numerous engagements, as a public and private character, Mr. Morris eminently fulfilled all those private duties necessarily imposed upon him by his high standing in society. His house was the seat of elegant and unostentatious hospitality, and open, for nearly half a century, to all the strangers, in good society, who visited Philadelphia, either on commercial, public, or private affairs; it may not be exaggeration to assert, that during a certain period, it principally depended on him to do the honours of the city. This hospitality was conspicuous and cordial, without the slightest tinge of ostentation. His entertainments, when in prosperity, were always elegant and often splendid, and his capacity to preside over, and give a zest to,

* Edinb. Encyclop. Philad. Edit. *sub art.*

the pleasures of the table, was remarkable. He possessed a peculiar facility in running off appropriate volunteer sentiments, at convivial meetings, which always embraced point and applicability; but he had no faculty for the sudden scintillations of wit. His habits were temperate, and he never suffered conviviality to interfere with the transaction of business. He is said to have been the first individual who introduced the luxuries of hot-houses and ice-houses into the United States.

He was remarkable for his domestic habits; and in his intercourse with his family and friends, and, indeed, with general society, no one made greater exertions to do kind offices. His great cheerfulness and benevolence attracted the esteem of a numerous circle of acquaintance, and the veneration of the people. Independent in his principles and conduct, he never courted the countenance of living man. Warmly devoted to his friends, he was almost idolized by them, but especially by those who were particularly dear to him—Alexander Hamilton and Gouverneur Morris. Whenever Washington came to Philadelphia, his first visit was to Robert Morris, now surrounded by the chains which he had assisted the hero to burst asunder. But, in all his misfortunes, he did not utter a complaint, notwith-

standing the ingratitude of his contemporaries:—he only smiled,

"Ingrato homine terra pejus nil creat."

He was, however, compelled to refrain from walking the streets, being continually followed by a grateful crowd consisting of the *middle and lower* classes of the people.

His unfortunate scene of land speculations, which embittered an old age, which ought to have been surrounded with all the ease and happiness that earthly gratitude could bestow, was a frenzy which totally transformed his character. Let us cover it with the mantle of oblivion.

"Infandum regina, jubes renovare dolorem!"

The mania of engrossing lands, under the fanciful idea that Europe would pour out its numbers and treasures into our wilderness, was not confined to him; although it proved more fatal to him than to others.

Fatigued with the political cares, which, from the time of his election to congress under the federal constitution, had so completely engrossed his mind, he was now anxious to retire to the relaxation of private life. His refusal to accept the situation of secretary of the treasury, offered to him by Washington, proves how little his patriotism was tinctured with ambition. Being requested to desig-

nate a gentleman for that office, he named colonel Hamilton. General Washington expressed considerable surprise at this selection, not being aware of the relative qualifications of Mr. Hamilton; but Mr. Morris declaring his own personal knowledge of his entire competency, he was appointed to that important post, and realized, in the fullest and most distinguished manner, the expectations of his friends.

Mr. Morris was a large man, and very simple in his manners, which were gentlemanly, though not highly polished, but free from the least tincture of vulgarity. He possessed a fine, open, and benevolent countenance; but his features were strong, and when engaged in deep meditation, they appeared austere, but not morose. Under misfortunes of the greatest magnitude, and in times of the severest trials, he never suffered the slightest tinge of melancholy to overshadow his countenance: the features of few individuals, among whom was general Washington, were more conspicuously brightened when lightened up by pleasantry; but misfortune or success had little agency in the change.

On the second of March, 1769, he was married to Miss Mary White, sister of the present right reverend bishop White, a lady of exemplary constancy and virtue, who still survives, and to whom

he was most affectionately attached. He was, for a long time, deplorably and frequently afflicted by a constitutional asthma. The formation of his chest indicated a strong tendency to this terrifying malady. Exercise at the pump was the specific which he resorted to, and he often laboured as though he were assisting to save a sinking vessel. He, however, by this means, frequently obtained relief from violent paroxysms, in a few moments.

At length, worn down by public labour, and private misfortunes, he rapidly approached the mansion appointed for all living; the lamp of life glimmered in its socket;—and that great and good man sunk into the tomb, on the eighth of May, 1806, in the seventy-third year of his age.

The memory of a man of such distinguished utility cannot be lost; and while the recollection of his multiplied services are deeply engraven on the tablet of our hearts, let us hope that the day is not distant, when some public monument, recording the most momentous occurrences of his life, and characteristic of national feeling and gratitude, may mark the spot where rest the remains of Robert Morris.*

* Garden's Anecd. p. 337.

NOTES.

Note A.

Beneath this marble,
lie interred,
the mortal Remains
OF JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D.—L. L. D.
a venerable and beloved President of the College of New Jersey.
He was born in the parish of Yester, in Scotland,
on the fifth of February, MDCCXXII, O. S.
and was liberally educated
in the Unive sity of Edinburg;
invested with Holy Orders, in the year MDCCXLIII,
he faithfully performed the duties
of his Pastoral charge,
during five-and-twenty years,
first at Beith, and afterwards at Paisley.
Elected President of Nassau Hall,
he assumed the duties of that office
on the thirteenth of August, MDCCLXVIII,
with the elevated expectations of the public.
Excelling in every mental gift,
he was a man of preeminent piety and virtue,
and deeply versed in the various branches
of literature and the liberal arts.
A grave and solemn preacher,
his sermons abound
in the most excellent doctrines and precepts for the conduct of life,
and in the most lucid expositions
of the Sacred Scriptures.

Affable, pleasant, and courteous, in familiar conversation,
he was eminently distinguished
in the concerns and deliberations of the Church,
and endowed with the greatest prudence,
in the management and instruction of youth.
He exalted
the reputation of the college amongst foreigners,
and greatly promoted the advancement
of its literary character and taste.
He was, for a long time, conspicuous
among the most brilliant luminaries of learning, and of the church.
At length
universally venerated, beloved, and lamented,
he departed this life on the fifteenth of November, MDCCXCIV,
aged LXXIII years.

GENERAL GADSDEN.

We republish, as a note to a passage in the life of Edward Ru ledge contained in our third volume, the following article, which has appeared in the National Intelligencer, because we believe it to be justly due to the memory of a man who was among the first in South Carolina to espouse boldly and openly the cause of Independence.* Of him it has been said that "his character was impressed with the hardihood of antiquity," and that "he possessed an erect, firm, and intrepid, mind, well calculated for buffeting with revolutionary storms;"†—and to him, as one of those heroes who first raised the standard of revolt, and first advised an act of oblivion, has been applied, as an appropriate epitaph, the lofty sentence,

In dificillimis reipublicæ urbem nunquam deserui; in prosperis nihil de publico deliberavi; in desperatis nihil timui.‡

FROM THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

In the life of Edward Rutledge, of South Carolina, among Sanderson's biographical notices of the signers to the Declara-

* Drayton's Mem.—Johnson's Life Greene. † Ramsay's S. Carolina.
‡ Letters from Geneva and France, vol. II, p. 97.

tion of Independence, a private letter to the late Judge Bee, which has been published, contains the following extract:

"The gentleman to whom you allude, is, if possible, worse than ever, more violent, more wrong-headed.

On the above, the biographer comments thus:

"The person alluded to in this extract was no doubt general Gadsden, with whom, from his excessive violence in politics and his great apprehension of being supposed under the guidance of others, it was difficult to act."

The letter noticed appears, from its date, to have been penned during, or immediately after, a debate in congress, on articles of association, which seem, from the many conflicting interests involved, to have excited at the time no little sensation in that body; and to one of the original features of which, all the Carolina delegates, with the exception of general Gadsden, were opposed. That that debate partook of all the inflammation common to political discussions under the excitement of opposition or local jealousies, is not to be questioned, and individual accusations of intemperance or errors of opinion were probably liberally indulged in at the time, as they ever have been on similar occasions, through the channels of private correspondence.

It is not essential to the truth of history, that these individual expressions of feelings or opinions should ever appear in print, particularly when written under the excitement of the occasion, of which every actor in the scene, however prudent or temperate, must, in a degree, partake.—As one of these communications, which from its temper, would seem to have been confidential, has, under respectable authority, found its way to the public eye, it is due to the memory of general Gadsden, whose political character, during the trying times of a revolution, should be tested by his public conduct, to give currency to the following facts. The extract from the letter inserted above, bears date October, 1774. By reference to the proceedings of the national congress for the same period, it appears, that, on information having been received of a large military force about to sail from Great Britain to America, for the support of general Gage, in his position at Boston:

"The people, (says Drayton,* vol. 1, page 105,) began to regret the late congress had not acted with vigor, and that general Gage had not been attacked and overcome in Boston, before the reinforcement could arrive. A proposition had indeed been made, by one of our deputies in congress, Mr. Gadsden, for that purpose; but it was overruled; congress were of opinion, such a measure would be premature.

"On the thirtieth of September, of the year 1774, it was resolved, that, "from and after the tenth of September, 1775, the exportation of all merchandize, and every commodity whatever to Great Britain and Ireland, and the W. Indies, ought to cease,' (p. 147;) and on the twentieth of October, (the same month in which Mr. Rutledge's letter bears date,) 'the non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreement was adopted and signed by the congress.' (p. 148.)"

In the article respecting "non-exportations, the sending rice to Europe was excepted," (p. 148.) It appears that this exception of rice was required, before the deputies from South Carolina, with the exception of general Gadsden, would give their assent to the articles of association. The proceedings of the continental congress were subsequently laid before the state assembly of South Carolina, and the article extracted above from the association, gave rise to a debate, thus noticed by Drayton, (vol. I, p. 168.)

"The articles of association determined upon by congress, and recommended to the provincial conventions and congresses, to be carried into execution, now came on to be considered, and the four last words of the fourth article of that instrument (except rice to Europe,) gave room for a long and violent debate." This exception had given so general a disgust, that the whole interior of the province considered their interests as sacrificed to the emolument of the rice planters, and, accordingly, a motion was made and seconded, 'that the delegates to be elected, use their utmost endeavours, at the ensuing congress at Philadelphia, to cause those words to be expunged.' Mr.

* Memoirs of the American Revolution, by John Drayton, L. L. D. 2 vols. 8vo. Mr. Drayton had been governor of South Carolina, and afterwards district judge of the United States.

Gadsden then rose and explained to the congress what had taken place in the continental congress during the passage of the obnoxious exception. He said, he thought it was a duty to declare, he had not any hand in causing those words to stand, in the instrument of association—that they had well nigh occasioned a *division in Congress.* And so ill was a proposition of that nature received, that it had occasioned a cessation from business for several days, in order to give our deputies time to recollect themselves. Then when the association was completing, and the members of congress were signing that instrument, *all our deputies but himself withdrew.* That he would have been glad of the honour of signing his name alone, and for so doing would have trusted to the generosity of his constituents. That he had offered to do so, and that Carolina was on the point of being excluded the association, when our deputies being again summoned by the secretary, they returned into congress, yielding up the article indigo, and that congress, only *for the sake of preserving the union of America, allowed the article rice to be added to the association.*

"That this, however, was illy received by the other colonies, who had thence become jealous of the rice colonies; and therefore, it was his opinion, that, *for the common good, as well as our own honour,* we ought to remove this as soon as possible, by having the words 'except rice to Europe,' struck out of the fourth article of association."

It is probable, therefore, that this disagreement on the part of general Gadsden with the other Carolina delegates, connected with the proposition for expelling general Gage from Boston, before reinforcements, known to be preparing in England, could arrive for his relief, subjected him to the rmarks indulged at the time by Mr. Rutledge, and which have not only at this late period found their way into print, but have been commented upon by such authority as must necessarily produce impressions, not, in our opinion, warranted by the public conduct of general Gadsden. In giving publicity, however, to the above, it is not the intention or desire of the writer of this article to invite a discussion on a subject which he would gladly have avoided noticing. He submits the facts, without comment, to an enlight-

ened and impartial posterity, under a conviction that, although a very honest difference of opinion may have prevailed among the Carolina delegates to the congress of 1774, enforced, no doubt, during the fervour of debate, with all the temper, ardour, or zeal of which each may have been by nature capable, "excessive violence, wrong-headedness, or apprehension of being supposed under the guidance of others," should not at this period, constitute any of the charges of error against any of the deputies. They were acting as the representatives of a people struggling for their liberties; and, on an occasion calculated to arouse all the feelings of human nature, ardor and zeal may have characterised the conduct of some of the members, prudence and temperance that of others, and, however divided in opinion, at the time, as to the proper measures, it is not to be doubted they were all honestly aiming at the same object, the accomplishment of which consummated the glory and independence of the American Republic.

END OF VOL. V.

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